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No. 6. True Story Series

A CHILD of LOVE

BY

MARGARET GRANT

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FOREWORD

IS the unmarried mother entitled to the same respect, the same social consideration as the married one?

Is a girl who has defied the laws of society necessarily bad, and should her fatherless child be ostracised and scorned because of the sin, if sin it be, of its parents?

These are questions that have engaged the attention of thoughtful persons ever since Man began to think, and they are not settled yet.

In this story a plea is frankly made for a more humane treatment of the unmarried mother and her child.

If you are one of those who belong in the advance guard of human progress you will sympathize with the frightful hardships endured by the girl who has written this frank confession.

If on the other hand, you believe that our existing social institutions should be held inviolate, and that every woman who transgresses the social code should be made to suffer, it is possible that you may change your opinion after reading this girl's harrowing story.

The story bears the unmistakable stamp of truth. Every word vibrates with emotion. Every line is a heart-throb.

You, whoever you may be, owe it to yourself to read this human document, and then—

Think!

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A CHILD OF LOVE

CHAPTER I

MARGARET GRANT

I WAS a pretty child. I not only know it now, but I knew it then, for the fact was often cast up to me by way of reproach. Gray eyes, golden hair, red lips, a skin like milk, a plump body, and the health of a wild-cat.

But what were these advantages in view of the fact that I was a child of shame? My mother and father had not been married. There was a terrible thing, to be sure! And, of course, the sins of the father are to be visited on the children. Whosoever doubts that knows little of the self-righteousness of a small community.

I do not remember ever hearing a word against my father, but I never heard the last of the hard words against my mother as long as I remained in the community into which I was born. I think the first speculation I ever made on the subject of morals was that morality was a matter of gender; that acts were not right or wrong in themselves, but took their character from the sex of the person doing them.

The facts in my case were these: My father was the son of a rich shipowner, and his father had set his heart on having his son marry the daughter of another rich shipowner.

My father had been willing to do as his father wished, because he liked the girl well enough and did not know

panted and laughed and pleaded; then, all at once, when her gray eyes were looking up into his and his brown ones down into hers, she grew weak; and their lips met.

She was conscious of a physical sensation—a throb, a thrill, a something maddening, suffocating, possessing her; but above that, outlasting it, a thing of all time, nestled a fullness of peace, a completeness of content that was like a dream of heaven.

My mother loved this man; her physical body and her spiritual being went out in passionate longing and came back satisfied.

She did not know that she loved him, he did not know that he loved her; but he sought her out later in the afternoon and stole away into the woods with her, where they might talk to each other, where their two souls might unfold, each to the other's pure gaze, like flowers that have waited only for the coming of the sun's beams.

They satisfied each other; each thrilled at the other's touch; he longed to take her yielding body in his arms again, and she longed to be crushed again to his breast, yet he would not have yielded to the longing, nor would she have permitted.

They said little to each other, and yet had a delightful sense of knowledge of each other when they reluctantly returned to the others lest their absence should have caused remark.

My mother wondered that night if this was to be like a dream, never to happen again. He had said good-by to her in a tone of trouble, and from something she had heard one of the girls say, she knew that he was preparing to go to Europe. A sense of utter loneliness overwhelmed her when she sat on her little bed to unbutton her frock; and she put her head on the pillow and cried, she did not know why.

CHAPTER II

NOT WISELY BUT WELL

THERE followed, for my mother, days of hopeless struggle to readjust herself to the now barren facts of her life. She tried to pull herself back into place with the grappling hooks of bitter truth: Mortimer Shaw had not given her a second thought; why should he? She was an ignorant, commonplace, awkward country girl; he was a college-bred, wealthy, handsome aristocrat. It was to her shame and self-scorn that she forever had before her his image, forever thrilled with the pressure of his strong arms, the sweep of his warm lips over her cheek and mouth.

"Why is he everything in my life and I nothing in his?" she wailed miserably, recognizing all the while that she was unreasonable, and promising herself bravely to put him out of her thoughts.

Then the miracle happened: Mortimer Shaw drove up to the farmhouse with his own horse and buggy. He had come to stay, to board there for the remainder of the summer, having arranged it with Silas Thorne by letter, a fact which that close-mouthed autocrat had not thought necessary to communicate to anyone but his wife, and which she had been too busy to repeat.

My mother saw him from the hilltop a few fields away from the house, which nestled in the shelter of the valley. She had watched the coming of the carriage with idle curiosity but without pausing in the rhythmic movement of her body, as she swayed back and forth in the raking of the hay. But she had ceased suddenly,

and with a little gasping cry, when she recognized Mortimer Shaw in the person who alighted from the carriage.

"Why has he come? Why has he come?" she repeated under her breath, over and over, as she stood leaning weakly on her rake, and watching the movement at the house. What words can describe the turmoil that was in her heart!

"Wal!" came to her ear, in her father's hard, imperative tones, "is the house afire?"

She choked and swallowed before she could find voice to answer: "A young gentleman with a horse and buggy is down there."

"Oh! it's *him*, I guess. Wal, I can't leave the field now. You go down an' take his horse. Put it in Jim's old stall."

If Silas Thorne had had an eye for anything but work done or left undone, he must have noticed the pale face and heaving bosom of the girl, as she let her rake fall; he would have noticed that she tottered at first as she started toward the house. But he was already at his work again, thinking only of the shower that was threatening his hay.

"Don't waste no time," he called after my mother. "Come back 's quick 's you kin; we've got to git this hay in."

The wonder of it now struck my mother, and she turned and asked: "Do you know who it is?"

"I s'pose it's that Shaw chap; he was to ha' come to-day."

"What—what has he come for?" she asked, breaking the habit of a lifetime in thus questioning her father, but the words were burning her and she could not help speaking them.

"Wal," replied her father, ironical in his surprise at being questioned by his daughter, "I guess he's come to stay a spell, if you hain't no objections."

She did not understand yet what it meant, but through the numbness of the surprise and the sudden revulsion she was conscious of a sense of complete peace and assurance.

Afterward she learned that Mortimer had gone away from the merry-making at which he had met her, his whole nature in such exquisite trouble because of her, that he had at once abandoned all thought of a European trip, and had come to the determination to gain an entrance into her home as a boarder. He had written to her father, offering such a price for his accommodation as the penurious farmer could not bring himself to refuse.

And now he stood there in the old farmhouse, as he told her afterward, talking to her mother, but with his eyes and ears all alert for her, and yet with his heart beating so violently that it seemed to him he was half deaf, half blind; so that it was not until her mother had said to him in her dull, weary way, "Here comes Margaret! she'll look after your horse," that he turned and saw her coming down the lane.

I can imagine how she looked to him, even if I never saw my poor mother in those days of perfect joy and gladness. There never was a face better formed for simple purity and innocence. Hair that never lost its ripple and golden sheen; big gray eyes, at once tender and steadfast; a nose that was not classical nor yet commonplace, but seemed to fit her face and at the same time to warn the observer of a bright, piquant nature; red lips that seemed ever ready to break into dimpling smiles; a chin whose firmness was lost in bewitching curves.

That she looked a very Hebe to him, I know; and there was very little of artifice in her toilet to destroy the illusion. A chemise and a simple gown of homespun were all she wore. A sunbonnet hung by its strings from her white throat, but she was guiltless of foot-

wear, as was plainly enough to be seen, since her skirt came barely to her ankles.

But she was as unconscious of what she wore as of what she lacked wearing, while he saw only the lovely, winsome face that had haunted him since the day of the merry-making, and only afterward recalled the almost suffocating sense of delight in the robust, rounded, lithe figure, erect in carriage, rhythmic in movement.

That was an almost speechless day with them both, although Mortimer Shaw, by one excuse or another, contrived to be in her presence most of the time; but it was only the beginning of their idyl, and both were passionately happy.

Day followed day, and if they grew no nearer together it was only because from the first their souls had been united; but they soon found expression for the throbbing passion that possessed them; and full expression, too, for when words seemed inadequate, as they often did, there remained ecstatic glances and thrilling touches.

He confided to her then that his father wished him to marry a girl he had chosen for him, but declared that if he could not persuade his father to accept her, he would take the consequences of having his own way. And at last he had formed a definite plan, which he talked over with my mother, so much to her joy, that she confessed to him that she could not help wishing his father would be obdurate.

The plan was simplicity itself. Mortimer Shaw had from his mother a small independent income; not enough to cut a figure in town with, but enough to buy a small farm with, and have some income besides.

"You will teach me how to farm," he said, "and we shall be the happiest folks in the world."

Finally the inevitable happened. From the first, Mortimer Shaw had found that the easiest and simplest way of being with mother was to share her work. If

she went to the field he went too; if she remained at the house, he found something to do in the little kitchen garden; and clever Silas Thorne chuckled over the fact that he had a very good extra hand who actually paid for the privilege of working.

Perhaps the father saw that his boarder was also the lover of his daughter, and was pleased with the notion of her making so good a match; certainly, he put no obstacle in the way of their being as much alone together as they wished, and one evening, as I have said, the inevitable happened—my mother became the wife of her beloved, but without the benefit of clergy, as the phrase goes.

It was my father, not my mother, who was aghast at what had happened. He knew better than she the condemnation that is visited on the woman who defies the most cherished of society's conventions. He reproached himself so bitterly that she sought in her love for arguments, and found them.

"What does it matter?" she asked tenderly; "could anything said by minister or magistrate make us nearer one than we are? Is it not, after all, the love we bear each other that makes us already man and wife? Have you not often said that we were joined by Heaven, and that the minister's words were only to let the world know what we already had found out? Do not take yourself to task; for my part, I am glad that I am all yours now."

He held her close in his arms, kissing her dear face over and over. "I reproach myself," he said, "because I have been false to my promise to myself that this should not happen. What you say is true, but the world would not see it so. But never mind, it is done, and if I could love you better I would do so now. To-morrow I shall go home and tell my father that I wish to marry you. I hope he will give his consent; but if he does not, then I shall return at once and we will run away to-

gether. Your father might refuse his consent if my father refused his, and we must take no chance of having obstacles put in our way. You must be my wife as soon as possible."

"Whatever you wish I shall do," she answered him. "I am your wife, and I shall obey you."

The next morning they said good-by to each other. They were happily alone in the barn, standing on the threshing floor, the subtle fragrance of the stored hay encompassing them about. And in the after years my mother could never be conscious of that sweet odor without having the tears start to her eyes. He held her close in his strong arms, her head nestled against his breast.

"Within three days I shall be back," he said to her; "nothing shall prevent. Then, within another twenty-four hours, you shall be my wife in the sight of the world, as you now are in the sight of Heaven and in our own hearts."

. . . . . .

Two days later, at supper, Silas Thorne, in the brutality of his hard, unsympathetic nature, said abruptly:

"Mortimer Shaw was killed on his way home from here. Horse ran away, scairt at the cars, an' threw him over the bluff."

There was a gasping cry and a frozen look of horror to show that my mother had heard. She did not say a word, but her world-weary mother, roused to pity by the dire tragedy, asked:

"Is it certain, Silas?"

"Hiram Johnson see the body himself. He said the face was all——"

"In mercy, Silas!" cried his wife.

My mother staggered from the room.

CHAPTER III

AN UNREPENTANT OUTCAST

THERE is no need to describe here how my mother bore her terrible pain; I could do no more than guess at it myself, for it was a thing she ever shuddered at recalling. It is enough to say that bear it she did as a pure, wholesome nature will bear the inevitable; and she worked, which was her father's only concern in the matter.

A thousand times over she thanked God that, at least, she had been a wife in very truth if not in name. Alas! incredible as it may seem to the sophisticated, she had no notion of what that being a wife in very truth might mean.

She was, indeed, disturbed by some of the physical phenomena which forced themselves on her notice, but she readily laid them all to the terrible blow that had fallen so stunningly upon her.

It was September when my father had been taken from her; it was January when her mother tremblingly took her aside and questioned her, the questions acting as an explanation to my mother, who cried out of a sudden: "Mortimer's child!"

There was no shame, no terror, no least trouble in the cry—nothing but pure joy and exultation. The bridge that could span the chasm between life and death was being built for her, and every vein in her body seemed to throb with the consciousness of sweet purpose.

"Folks are talking," gasped her mother, horrified that her daughter was so little concerned about her

shame. "And your father! your father! I shall have to tell him."

The poor mother, who had brought up her daughter in the innocence of utter ignorance, wrung her hands, sobbed incoherent words of pity and blame, and perhaps vaguely saw that there was fault elsewhere than in the girl who had taken her pure nature for a guide, and who had thus wandered from the paths beaten by convention.

But pity my mother as she might, her fear of her tyrant overmastered every other emotion, and she dared not delay telling him what had come to his child.

Within the hour, then, Silas Thorne stood before his shrinking daughter, his hard eyes scanning her pitilessly and finding sufficient confirmation of the tale his wife had brought him. It was a long and hard silence for my mother to endure, as she searched that harsh face for one sign of love or tenderness.

"It is true, then," he said, at last, "and you were not his wife?"

"In the sight of Heaven I was," she faltered.

"Bah!" he cried, in bitter scorn of Heaven's part in the affair. "Were you his wife by the laws of man?"

"Only by the law of Heaven—love," she answered softly.

"You harlot!" roared her father, pointing his shaking finger at the door. "You bring shame and dishonor on a stainless name and make the foulness of your sin its very excuse. You are no daughter of mine; I renounce you. Go out from under my roof and herd with your own kind. I will never speak to you again, never willingly look at you. I give you half an hour to gather what belongs to you. Then go! To me, henceforth you are as a harlot, nameless, shameless, utterly defiled."

They were the last words ever spoken between them; and my mother never saw her father again. She went to

her little room, put together the few things that were hers—and they were so few as to make a bundle easily portable—bestowed her money in her bosom—she had just four dollars and fifty-seven cents—donned her outer garments and walked from the house, which, so far as her knowledge went, might have been deserted of all human inhabitants; for she saw not even her mother. All her life after she was tender with cats, because as she stole through the kitchen the old tortoise-shell arched its furry back and rubbed against her skirt.

"Good-by," she whispered, and closed the door which was never to open to her again.

Certainly the homeless girl knew that the cold was intense, that the snow was ankle deep, that the short afternoon would soon be nearing its close, but she did not concern herself about these things, when behind her she was leaving the revealed record of hideous human blundering of which she knew herself the victim, when before her lay the unknown with its possibilities of sweet and tender happiness in motherhood, or of the misery of which her own father had been the first, the ready and the ruthless dispenser.

Would Mortimer's father be as cruel as her own father had been? That was the question that was now to find an answer. The town of B——, the full name of which it can do no good to tell, since it plays a small part in this history, was twenty miles away; and my mother, despite the double burden she carried, despite the cold and the snow and the coming darkness, meant to walk thither if she could.

As it happened, she did not have to walk all the way, but was given a lift which carried her over those miles nearest home which she had most dreaded traversing. But of infinitely more consequence to her than the assistance she thus received, was the evidence which accompanied it that all the world would not judge her as cruelly as her father had done.

She had gone half a mile on the road away from her father's house, when she heard the jingle of sleigh bells behind her. She gave her hood a tug to pull it farther if possible over her face so that she might not be recognized. She knew that, according to country custom, she would be asked to ride if there were room in the conveyance, and so it happened.

"Whoa!" cried the driver in a hearty tone; "jump in an' ride, won't you?"

"Thank you, no," my mother answered from under her hood, and nervously accelerating her pace so as to pass the now standing horse. She recognized the man as a stalwart young farmer, who owned a small place not far from her father's.

"My God!" she heard him cry in an odd tone that had a note of horror in it; "it's Margaret Thorne! Margaret! is it you?"

My mother faced him, nerving herself to composure. "Yes, it is I, Henry; I don't care to ride, thank you."

"My God!" he said under his breath, and then burst forth with: "Your father has turned you out! Is that it, Margaret?"

Then my mother knew that her story was common property, and a feeling of defiance toward the whole community, mingled with a hot passion to get out of it, filled her soul.

"Yes," she said, half fiercely, "he has turned me out."

She turned and walked hurriedly on as if she knew that she was outcast and would accept her position not with shame, but with dignity. But in a moment the horse was stopping by her side again, and Henry Secor was saying to her:

"Where are you going, Margaret?"

"That is no business of yours, Henry Secor," she answered vehemently. "I am going my own way and that is not yours."

"You think I'm just prying, Margaret," he said in a voice subdued by strong emotion. "That ain't so, and you'd oughter know me well enough for that. If I ask you questions, it's to help you as if I'd been your brother. Tell me where you're going."

"I'm going to B——."

"Then you will git in here and let me take you as fur as I go," he said almost imperatively.

"No," she cried, "I am going to walk."

"That is not right, and I will not permit it," he said firmly, at the same time making room for her by his side by throwing aside the buffalo robe that covered his legs. "Git in, Margaret! you know I am right."

She did know he was right, and knew that she might trust him as if he had been her brother. She knew, too, that if she contended with him there, others might come along and see them, and that, then, the gossip about her would include him. She climbed into the sleigh and sank down by his side, letting him wrap the robe about her passively.

They rode a long distance before either of them spoke; then he said suddenly in a way that showed he had been thinking hard about her affairs: "You are going to see *his* father?"

"Yes."

"Margaret," he said, in a tone of pleading earnestness, "don't you see that that won't help matters any? I wouldn't say a word to you if I could help it; least of all when it might seem as if I was taking advantage of having you where you couldn't help listening to me; but there is no way out of it, if I would help you, and that is what I want to do more than anything else in the world."

My mother sat quite silent, not even looking at him, but staring in front of her like one who is prepared to endure what cannot be avoided. He stopped and waited a moment; then went on:

"What good will it do you if old Mr. Shaw does help you? He won't take you in and do for you, you may be sure of that; and even if he wanted to he could not give you the name of Shaw. And you've got to have a name for—for—— Oh! don't take me amiss, Margaret, but I loved you before ever you saw Mortimer Shaw and I love you now. Take my name, Margaret, for that innocent child. I swear to God I will do for it like my own, and I will love and cherish you as if nothing had ever happened; for I know you are just as pure and good to-day as you were ten year ago. Let me drive now to the minister's. No, don't say a word until I say all that's in my heart.

"You don't love me. I know that, but I love you enough for both. People are talking now, but they will stop talking after you are my wife, and the child can never be pointed at and shamed. You've got to think of the child, Margaret. Think of me a little, too, Margaret. I've wanted you these two year—yes, these six year, if it comes to that, for I loved you since you was a little girl, though I never had the courage to say so. May I go to the minister's?"

"No, Henry." Mother was sobbing. "No, I cannot be your wife, but may God bless you for saying such words to me now when I so sorely need them. I cannot be your wife, because I do not and cannot love you."

"But love ain't everything," cried Henry, puzzled by my mother's simplicity, "reputation is a lot in this world. I guess you don't know how folks 'll treat you."

"I know my own father turned me out of his house."

"Yes, I suppose you do know, poor girl! But if you do know, I should think you would put yourself right with the world by marrying me. Certainly, I would not expect you to marry me under other circumstances if you did not love me, but it's different now. Besides, you will learn to love me, I am sure."

"I cannot marry you, Henry," my mother answered

earnestly. "I shall always think of you as one of the best men in the world, but I cannot marry you. Besides, I think you do not understand as well as I do. I am already disgraced. I see now that I have done wrong according to the way the world sees such things; so that if I marry you I would be bringing disgrace on you, too. For how would it alter anything if you gave my child and Mortimer's your name? The child would not be any the less Mortimer's."

"Ah," he cried eagerly, "but the world does not look at it in that way. If your child is born and you have no husband, the world will scorn and despise you, but it will overlook your fault if you have a husband. Don't you see?"

"No," she answered sadly, "I cannot see it. If it is true, then it means that what my father called the laws of man are born of hypocrisy. I have never thought about these things, Henry, but it seems to me there can be just one reason why a girl should give herself to a man and be the mother of his child, and that is because of the love that draws them together. I am not saying anything against marriage, for that seems very beautiful to me, and I would rather have been Mortimer's wife than have worn a crown; but I can feel myself more pure and good, being the mother of his child without being his wife by the laws of man, than being the lawful wife of a man I do not love. To be a wife without that love would make me feel myself what my father called me when he turned me from his house."

There was more pleading on his part, but my mother would not yield, nor did she ever regret not having done so. But over and over again to me she spoke his name and always with a blessing.

When Henry Secor found he could not persuade my mother he sadly enough ended by promising her that he would always be her friend, and begging her to let him know what happened to her at Mr. Shaw's.

He took her to the railroad station nearest them, which was six miles away, and forced her to take five dollars of his money so that she might pay her fare and have something with which to go to a tavern that night in case Mr. Shaw should not receive her.

What he said about this possibility of Mortimer's father thrusting her away made my mother uneasy and troubled, but on the other hand Henry's goodness gave her courage to believe that her own father would prove to be the exception rather than the rule.

It was half-past seven in the evening when she reached the little seaport town, and it was eight o'clock when she stood in front of the big house where she had been told the Shaws lived. It stood back from the street, in spacious grounds, and its many lighted windows spoke eloquently to the weary, heart-sore, and hungry girl of the comfort and the welcome that might so well await her there.

She lifted the latch of the gate and crept up the brick walk, half a prey to a sudden terror, half suffocated with the thought that up that same walk Mortimer had gone many hundreds of times. It seemed to her she had not felt so near to him since that hour when he had held her in his arms for the last time.

She walked softly and slowly up the steps of the porch, and after a few moments of hesitation placed her hand on the old-fashioned knocker. Then a sudden panic seized her and her impulse was to turn and run away. That she resisted, and lest she should be taken by a similar impulse too strong to resist, she raised the knocker and struck twice.

Then, with her heart in her throat, she stood there and waited while footsteps within the house could be heard approaching the door.

CHAPTER IV

MORTIMER'S FATHER

WHEN the door of the Shaw mansion opened, a luxurious wave of warmth and comfort struck her, and seemed to emphasize to my mother the icy coldness and the bitter loneliness of the world outside—that world which, so far as she knew, contained no roof to shelter her.

To add to the contrasts which assailed her with a sort of pitiless insistence, there stood Mortimer's sister in the doorway, asking her with the curtness of youth what she wished and why she did not come in so that the door might be shut. There was no doubt that the young lady was his sister. There was a certain resemblance, for one thing, and that was reinforced by the easy confidence of her manner, the richness of her clothing, and an indefinable something in the tone of her voice.

My mother had an impulse to put out her hand to touch one who was almost her sister, to try to win from her a gentle word of sympathy; but a wistful look into the cold, disdainful eyes gave a sharp check to the impulse, and the outcast stepped meekly into the warm hall, while the door was closed with an impatient bang.

"I would like to see Mr. Shaw, if you please," my mother said in a low tone.

"Who shall I say it is?" was the curt question, accompanied by a glance that swept my mother from head to foot and caused her to shrink with a sudden consciousness of her condition.

"Margaret Thorne," she answered confusedly.

Miss Shaw lifted her prettily arched eyebrows in a manner to indicate that the name conveyed no information to her, and went away, leaving my mother to stifle a sob of disappointment; for there had been a wild hope in her heart that her name might mean something in that house.

In a few minutes Miss Shaw returned and ushered my mother into a small room, which seemed half office, half library, and bade her wait there. My poor mother sank into a chair, feeling more desolate than at any time since her father had driven her out of his house. Hope had told its customary, flattering tale of what she might expect in Mortimer's home, but now that she was in it and hope had fled, nothing remained but the dull ache of despair.

Her eyes mechanically and yet with a sort of eagerness began to study the room in which it was altogether likely that Mortimer had sat many an hour, since here were the books of which he had talked to her. And there, by the window, was a little easy chair, which it needed no cleverness on her part to know had been his.

A sob which she could not choke back rose to her lips and she started up to go over and touch the chair, to press her lips to it, perhaps, when by her change of position she was brought face to face with a portrait of him whom she had so dearly loved.

With a cry in which pain and joy were mingled she sprang toward the picture, and gazed eagerly into the kindly, loving eyes, the tears falling from her own.

"Mortimer! sweetheart! husband!" she wailed, and leaning against the wall under the picture, covered her face with her hands and sobbed quietly.

"Well, my girl, what can I do for you?" demanded a gruff but not unkindly voice.

My mother started, hurriedly brushed the tears from her eyes, and anxiously studied the face of the man who, as she now realized, held her fate within his hands.

Sternness and determination were stamped deep on his features, but the hardness and grinding cruelty which characterized her father's face were absent.

The suddenness with which Mr. Shaw, or Captain Shaw, as he was more commonly known, had come upon her, had robbed my mother of whatever method she might have had in the appeal she meant to make to him, and she acted on the impulse of the moment, rather obeying her heart than her head.

She turned from contemplating his face and looked up into the face of the portrait, even putting her trembling hand up as if to take strength from contact with it.

"You loved him, sir, and he loved me; in his name I ask your help, your kindness."

"My boy? What is it you say?" came in startled tones from the lips of the bereaved father.

At the same time he fixed his keen eyes on his visitor, studying her with a new interest, trying to classify her. He must have seen that she was from the farming district; he might have seen that she was beautiful; he evidently did see the signs of coming motherhood, for his face set itself in hard lines; a change my mother noted.

"Mortimer and I were to have been married," she faltered. She remembered now how she had arranged it in her mind to say this only after first telling how Mortimer had spent his summer at her father's, and how they had fallen in love with each other.

"Who are you?" he demanded sharply, closing the door of the room, which had until now been open.

My mother, seeing how he was hardening toward her, put out her hand deprecatingly toward him, and said pleadingly:

"I came here to tell you about myself and what Mortimer was to me. Won't you hear me in kindness?"

"I will hear you in justness," he answered; "I can-

not promise more than that to one who begins as you do."

My mother stood for a few moments, one hand resting on the back of a chair, the other pressing her heaving bosom.

"Your son Mortimer," she began abruptly, as if in despair of finding some smoother way of doing so, "spent the summer on our farm."

"Thorne!" Captain Shaw exclaimed, an expression of enlightenment flashing into his face. "And you are——"

"Margaret Thorne. Mortimer loved me, and I loved him. We could not help it. We loved each other the first time we met."

"Do you know," he cried in a sort of passion, "that you are accusing my dead boy?"

"I do not mean to accuse him of anything," she answered simply. "He was on his way home to tell you that he wished to marry me when—when he died."

"And you have waited until now to tell me this," he said scornfully and sternly.

"There would have been no need to tell you," she replied with a simplicity that was pathetic, "only that our child was coming."

"Who sent you to me?"

"I was sent by no one; I came because you were his father, and because I have no other place to go. My own father has driven me from his house."

"And why should I treat you better than he? Do you think it a passport to my favor and consideration to accuse my dead son?"

"I accuse him of nothing, sir. It was unfortunate that we were not married according to law, but I hold it no fault in him that we were not; he meant to return at once after speaking to you."

"What you say is preposterous. Even if you owe your condition to my son, which I will not believe, he

would never have married you, for he knew that I would never have consented. Besides, he was already engaged to another—a young lady in his own walk of life."

My mother would not tell him that Mortimer had intended to disregard his wishes concerning his marriage; so she ignored that part of his speech, and merely said earnestly:

"My unborn child will owe its life to Mortimer, who would have been my husband had he lived."

"You assert this; can you prove it? Have you a scrap of evidence that would be accepted by any unprejudiced person?"

"I have nothing but my word."

Captain Shaw laughed scornfully, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Let me tell you, my girl, that this is a very poor trick to try to put upon me, and an infamous one. I presume you are in want, or you would not have tried so desperate a device as this. Here are ten dollars. You will get nothing more from me."

My mother drew back, and was about to reject the money, when another thought came to her.

"Do you give me this for the use of Mortimer's child?" she asked.

"No," he cried angrily, "I give it to you to be rid of you."

"You can be rid of me without that," she replied, her spirit rising. "I would take the money for Mortimer's child, even if you gave it grudgingly and with harsh words, because I would not by word, thought, or act injure that child. But I ask nothing, will take nothing for myself excepting as the mother of his child. I am sorry to have troubled you, sir; I will go, if you please."

She motioned him to stand aside from before the door so that she might pass out, but he held his position, his face stern and hard in his bitter anger at my mother.

"You may take the money or leave it," he said harshly. "But before you go we shall understand each other. If you go from here and spread the report that my dead son is the cause of your condition, I will have you punished to the very extreme of the law. My dead son shall not be defamed by one like you."

"One like me!" my mother repeated, the terrible truth coming home to her now as never before, that, however innocent and pure she might consider herself, in the eyes of men she was stamped what her father had called her.

"Aye! one like you," he answered sternly. "When a woman's virtue is of so flimsy a quality as yours, how can she expect to be trusted? If my boy had lived he would have argued as I do; he would have said that if you would give yourself so cheaply to him, so you would to any other man who caught your wandering fancy. He would have questioned as I do whether or not he was the father of the child you carry, even though he might have known what I do not believe—that anything had passed between you to justify the thought."

"You need say no more, sir," panted my mother; "I will go and you shall not hear of me again. But, sir, this I will say: Mortimer knew what you cannot know, that because my love for him was such as it was, it was a joy to give myself to him, and that it would have been impossible for me to give myself to any other even though minister and magistrate had placed the seal of legality and respectability on the union. You may call me what vile names you will, as my own father has done, but shame I do not feel and never shall feel for having loved and expressed that love in the purest, sweetest way that lay in my power."

How he could have heard my mother speak, how he could have looked into her honest eyes without knowing that she was pure and innocent of aught but conventional wrong, I cannot understand; but it seems he was

so warped that he could see but one side of the question. He listened to my mother, then stood aside and pointed to the door.

"Go!" he said. "You do not feel shame because you are shameless. It may be that you caught my boy in your toils, but you will find no profit in that now. You have had your wages, I will be sworn, and there rested no responsibility on my son after you were paid. He marry you, with the proof in his possession that you held yourself so cheap that he might have you for the asking? He would not have been so foolish. Go!"

CHAPTER V

THE POORHOUSE

DESCRIPTION of my mother's emotions, as she walked out of the house of Mortimer's father would be at once too harrowing and quite unnecessary. She had but one card to play, and she had played it to no purpose. Now there was before her the hand-to-hand struggle with the world, all of whose prejudices were against her, the most cherished of whose conventions she had defied.

Perhaps if she had been alone; perhaps, even, if she had accepted the convention of the world in regard to her condition, she would have walked down to the nearest wharf and ended her trouble and her despair in the icy water. But, because she felt herself never alone while that little, innocent life was growing within her; because, in her simplicity, she rejected the world's convention that something far less than love would alone justify her, she never even contemplated anything but making the fight against the world which frowned so darkly upon her.

That night my mother wandered about seeking a hotel of such little pretension in appearance as not to threaten too high a price for accommodation. She passed by one and another, frightened away by too much noisy hilarity in one, by something indefinable in another, by something within herself at a third, until she had rejected all she could find. Then, chilled through and covered with the snow which had been falling fast all the while, she plunged into the first that offered without regard to her previous or present judgment of it.

It proved to be a sailor resort, and at once my mother's character was mistaken, and she was approached with words and ways that frightened her into immediate flight; a thing that was accomplished only because it was so unexpected on her part.

At her next attempt she was fortunately successful in finding shelter, although she was asked many more questions than she cared to answer, and some of which she did not answer except by evasion. And, in the fear that she might be traced by either friend or unfriend, she gave her name as Margaret Grant, a name she held to ever after.

She ate the simple meal they gave her, and went to her room, leaving her wet garments to be dried by the kitchen fire. Her one great need was for reflection. Any illusions she might have had were gone, and she saw herself on one side, the world of respectability on the other.

The wonder is she was not crushed and utterly disheartened. Perhaps if she had known more, she would have been, but even that I do not believe. My mother was ignorant, but she had a certain directness and honesty of reasoning that prevented her from accepting any view of a thing for no better reason than that the majority accepted it.

She knew she was an outcast and she even knew that she and my father had been unwise, just as a martyr in the holiest cause is unwise in defying the world arrayed against him; but see that she and he had done any real wrong she could not.

This she reflected on, and dismissed it for the consideration of the more pressing subject of the future. And before she fell asleep that night she had determined that at the earliest opportunity she would go to Boston, where she could be lost to all who knew her up to that time. There I might be born where there would be no finger of scorn to point at me, where I might take my

place according to my merits, rather than according to the preconceived notions of those who knew the circumstances of my birth.

So my poor mother planned; and it was easy enough in the planning; but she dared not spend her last cent in making her way to the big city, and so she found a small room in the very slums of the little town, and tried to earn a living, and at the same time lay by a few dollars with which to make her venture to Boston.

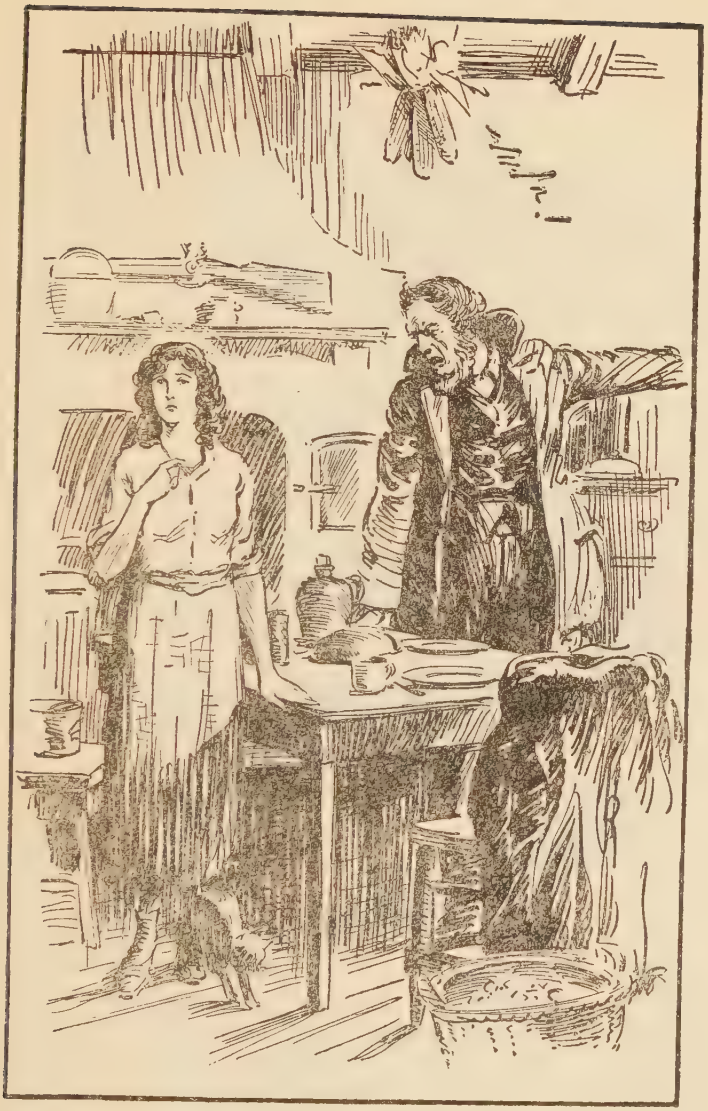
She did any kind of work that offered, but respectable folks ferreted out her "shame" with a sort of eager gusto, and refused her any work; those who employed her, in spite of the absence of the "plain gold band" on her third finger, indemnified themselves by screwing her down to the lowest possible figure.

Spring, which comes so tardily in that section, found my mother still struggling bravely, but physically less and less able to make that struggle. She knew of her plain, good sense that if she would bring a strong child into the world she must nourish it well through herself; so she had lived carefully and was so strong and active that even when the month of May came, and I within two months of the end of the first stage of my journey, she dared to think of starting out to walk to Boston.

But to walk so many miles was one thing, while to scrub floors and do similar drudgery as she had been doing was quite another. That sort of work was even refused her when she applied for it; so that my mother was face to face with the new problem of how to live without working.

She solved it by attempting to carry out her idea of walking to Boston. As she owed no one a cent, there was nothing to keep her from starting at any time; and she chose a warm May morning for her departure.

She was more than glad to get away from the town—she was anxious to do so; for she now feared that some-



"YOU HARLOT!" ROARED HER FATHER, POINTING HIS SHAKING FINGER AT THE DOOR.

(*See Page* 12)

SHE FELT MY HAND TOUCH HER AND INSTANTLY THREW THE BOOK WITH ALL HER STRENGTH TOWARD THE POND.

(*See Page* 55)

thing might happen to reveal her hiding place to Henry Secor.

Twice during the winter she had barely escaped meeting him in the streets. She did not know it then, although the suspicion of it was strong within her, that he was actually in search of her; but whether he sought her or not, she would not be seen by him.

She had chosen her way, and must walk it alone. She respected him too much to allow him to even know anything about the life she was leading. If she could not love him as he loved her, at least she had another sort of love for him, and wished to spare him a needless sorrow.

Long afterward she learned that Henry had gone to Captain Shaw's house and had had an angry interview with him, telling him plainly what he thought of his conduct in driving the mother of his grandchild into the bitter world.

The proud merchant ordered the plain-spoken farmer out of his house, but must have been impressed with the story he had told of mother's pure and innocent life; for he, too, tried to find her afterward. It was too late then, however, for my mother had changed her name and always crept out of sight on the few occasions when there was any danger of meeting him.

These things were not known to her on the morning when she shook the dust of B—— from off her feet, and probably they would not have affected her conduct if she had known them.

She left the town, not merely with courage, but even with a certain gayety. She had no doubt, now that she was in the open air and advancing toward the country where vegetation was springing into life, that she could easily accomplish the walk.

But she counted without the curious New England people, without the local laws, without her dependence on charity of thought and unquestioning kindness. She

contrived in two days to go twenty miles; and then, despite her tears and agonized protests, she found herself being taken to the county poorhouse. And there, for the time being, her journey to Boston ended.

She would give no account of herself, and they kept her there as a vagrant, although she declared herself ready to work with all her might if they would find work for her to do.

There she had her severest trials; for she would not adjust herself to the ways of the unhappy paupers, who had learned to cringe and whine for the betterment of their condition.

She was mockingly known as the queen of the poorhouse. Not that she was ever ungentle or fractious, but perhaps because in her very gentleness was a greater aloofness than in a more studied isolation of herself.

Indeed, as soon as she saw that she must remain there until after the birth of her child, she set herself to so conduct herself as would be best for me. Ah, that good, sweet mother of mine!

She would not repine, she would be cheerful and sunny; she worked industriously; she answered gibes with acts of kindness. At the first the inmates flouted her and the officials coarsely insulted her; but in the end, and before I was born, she had won the good will of all; so that when I came, which was early in the morning on the twenty-third of June, my mother was kindly if roughly cared for.

She was disappointed when they told her I was a girl, for, as she told me afterward, she had hoped, almost believed, in fact, that I must be a boy. She had felt that Mortimer's son would rise above his environment and the circumstances of his birth simply because he was a boy; whereas all the conditions of life were against a girl born under similar circumstances.

Nevertheless when they put me into her arms and I seized her swollen breast, she forgot everything but the

passionate joy of motherhood, and murmured as she snuggled me closer:

"Never mind, my baby! you were conceived in love, and born in love; you shall live in love, and so may you be happy."

And in that same hour, when she lay there in the cheerless room in the poorhouse, filled with a new peace and content and reveling in the delight of suckling me, was conceived the daring thought that there was no reason why a girl should of necessity be less in the world than a boy.

CHAPTER VI

A REPROBATE

I WAS a month old when my mother left the poorhouse. She still clung to her purpose of going to Boston, but had decided that it would be far better for me to remain in the country at least during the summer months. A young farmer had come to the poorhouse seeking help—cheap help, of course. He took my mother because she was young and strong, and because the officials gave her such a good reputation for industry. He offered her four dollars a month because she was incumbered with a baby.

My mother thought herself very lucky in finding a place which gave promise of being so good; for the thing that had impressed her more than anything else was that the farmer could hardly keep either his eyes or his hands off of me, as if his heart were full of the love of children.

The poorhouse authorities had told him as much of my mother's story as they knew, as was only right; and he took her to his home, knowing that "she was no better than she should be."

On his part, he told my mother on their way to the farm what his situation was, and what would be expected of her. His story could be summed up in a few words: his wife was not strong and could barely do the work in the house; so that for my mother there would be the milking of the cows, the washing and ironing, and the dairy work, together with such other things as would fill in her spare time.

My mother objected to nothing, but smiled with a cheerfulness that must have astonished the man, as he laid out work for her that might well have broken down a strong man to do. But, under her father's not too tender tuition she had learned to work to the limit of her powers, and was therefore not to be frightened.

As it turned out, it was the farmer's wife who made the objections. They were not, indeed, to the amount of work my mother did or was expected to do, but were to my mother and to me.

The unfortunate creature, not yet in her thirtieth year, was a worn-out drudge, and worse than that, she was childless. The instant she saw my mother, young, blooming, strong, and with a child in her arms, her starved soul rose in revolt and she hated her.

It was unreasonable, but my mother always spoke of her with infinite pity, as she ever did of a childless woman. Indeed, she had a similar pity for a jealous one; for, set apart from the rest of the world as she was, she seemed able to measure emotions better than others who were a part of the environment which created those emotions.

"I sometimes think," she once said to me in her simple way, which always took her direct to her end, "that jealousy cannot exist with perfect love, and that perfect love can never exist with a feeling of ownership in the object. Marriage seems to so many a mere giving in ownership with the right to prevent any enjoyment that is not shared in common."

This poor woman had no strength, no beauty, no children; her husband was, to the limit of his emotions, her property; she feared he would find in my mother's presence and in mine a satisfaction for the lack in her.

My mother remained there just a month and left it, with four dollars in her pocket, to take the place of hired help on an adjoining farm; for her efficiency, together with her story, had become common property in

the neighborhood within a week. I have no doubt her story had been thoroughly canvassed at church, the first Sunday after her arrival at the farm.

As the farm to which she now went was my home for a large part of my childhood, I shall describe it as it seemed to me when I was old enough to have an independent notion of things.

The farm itself was large as to mere acreage, though not more than a third of it was available for cultivation; the other two-thirds were meadow, woodland, and rocks. Two beautiful brooks ran through it, in which were surely the daintiest, most agile trout that ever lived. To me, in spite of whatever human beings might interject into my life at that time, the farm was a paradise.

Abner Hackett and his wife Jane owned the farm, and won from it, I am sure, all that could by any possibility be forced or coaxed out of it. They were considered well-to-do, and I have no doubt they were; for they had a genius for being able to live, selling everything and buying nothing.

As might be imagined, they were a weazened, kiln-dried couple, and seemed to fancy that any enjoyment in this world would jeopardize their hopes of happiness in the next; so they took no pleasure themselves, and would have denied it to others, if that had been possible.

Abner was a deacon, and, in virtue of that high office, took upon himself, as much as might be, the carrying out of that gentle law that children should be punished for the sins of their parents. Often enough he reminded me of the sin of my mother—most persons I found made rather light of my father's part in the matter—and would have administered punishment oftener yet than he reminded me, but for the determined, not to say fierce, opposition of my mother, who would permit no one to touch me in the way of punishment.

So neither Abner nor Jane Hackett played much of a part in my life as long as my mother lived, and I was

as happy and free as a child could be under the circumstances.

There remains another dweller in that household yet to be described, who played a part in my life as important, I think, as any living person, not excepting even my dear mother.

Thomas Hackett was Abner's youngest brother; a man past middle age, with one withered arm and a great scar across his forehead. He was variously known as a reprobate, a ne'er-do-well, and a godless man; and the wonder of the neighborhood was that close-fisted Abner should keep such a man on his farm.

I think, indeed, that it was a thing that was laid to Abner's credit that he maintained his worthless brother; and as that brother was a silent man, who took no trouble to either deny or affirm anything that was said to his discredit; and as Abner was not above looking sanctimonious when the subject of his brother was the topic of conversation, no one knew that Thomas was one of Abner's most profitable investments.

The facts were that Abner made a deal of money breeding horses of a high grade, and that Thomas, who had been a circus rider in his day, and had in the circus picked up many an idea and trick in relation to horses, besides being a born horseman, was invaluable to him.

Well, Thomas and I were friends from the day I was taken to the farm. My mother says he took me from her arms so that she might alight from the wagon, and insisted upon holding me until he could no longer find an excuse for doing so.

Tomaso, I always called him from the time I could say anything distinctly; and it was not through precocious sauciness, nor yet from my natural perversity of temper, that I refused to say Mr. Thomas, but only because I had made a secret compact with him to that effect.

He was my friend and my mother's friend; and he

it was who persuaded my mother against going to Boston until she should have accumulated sufficient money to enable her to live for a few months without the work that it would be difficult for her to obtain at first.

There were two reasons why my Tomaso had the reputation of a reprobate: he would not go to meeting, and he had the misfortune to be controlled by an appetite for strong drink, which overtook him about once a year. Then he would be gone away from the farm for two weeks it might be, and would return pale and haggard.

But of that I knew nothing for many years, and to me he was simply a dear friend, and a most wonderful man.

My mother had confided to him her wish to so rear me that I would not be at a disadvantage in the world because of being a girl. He had listened to her in his silent way, and had left her without a word in response to what she had said to him. But some hours later he had joined her and had said, his blue eyes sparkling with suppressed eagerness:

"Margaret, I have been thinking about little Peggy, and what you told me. I want to make a proposition to you."

"Yes, Mr. Thomas?"

"You know, perhaps, that I traveled with a show once?"

"Yes, I have heard it said."

"I was a bare-back rider, acrobat, gymnast. Then I got into a row one day and got this cut on my head, and this useless arm, and I retired from the ring forever."

My mother wondered what he was leading to in this recital, which seemed to bring up bitter memories, but said nothing, letting him take his own time in resuming.

"Well," he went on, "you are wondering what this has to do with that mite of a baby. I'll soon tell you. In the first place you two are the only human beings

I've been what you might call drawn to in many a year. I realized before you said a word what her chance in life was likely to be, but I hadn't thought it out in the same way you had. What I want to say is, that you're right in trying to think out some way to give her the same chance as a boy. Do you know what she needs first of all?"

"What?"

"Muscles, activity, courage. Let me train her, Margaret Grant, and I tell you she'll be able to hold her own with the best boy that lives. Will you turn over that part of your trust to me, Margaret?"

"Gladly I will."

And so the baby girl went into training in the hands of the reprobate; and this story would not have been worth the telling but for that reprobate.

CHAPTER VII

THE POWER OF WILL

I MUST anticipate my story a little bit in order that it may be better understood what the power of the love was between my Tomaso and me.

I have spoken of his fits of drunkenness. His first one during my life at the farm I knew nothing of, for I was only a year old. My mother, however, knowing nothing of his sad habit, and noticing his unexpected absence one day, inquired of Jane where he was.

"Herding with harlots and drunkards," snapped Jane, with a sour look at my mother. "I hope when he comes back he will be a solemn warning to you."

Just what the bitter words meant beyond a fling at her, my mother did not know until poor Tomaso returned some two weeks later, a complete wreck of the clear-eyed, self-respecting man he had always seemed to her.

He never referred to the matter, and avoided my mother for days, although she saw him surreptitiously making love to me at every opportunity. Then, by degrees, their friendly relations were resumed and he was the same kindly, helpful man as before.

I was a little over two years old when he suddenly disappeared again. My mother understood this time and was plunged into sorrowing silence; but I did not understand, and in my baby imperiousness constantly demanded "my Tomaso."

Then, one day, when I was teasing my mother for my Tomaso, I saw his familiar and deeply loved figure coming up the long lane. I laughed gleefully and with a

shout started to meet him as swiftly as my fat baby legs could carry me.

My mother's impulse was to stop me, knowing what his condition would be, but dreaded to do so, lest he should see her and misinterpret the act; so she let me run to him, and stood watching us anxiously.

I ran straight up to him, filling the air with the music of my baby screams of joy; then suddenly stopped, just as I was about to throw myself into his arms, for I had caught sight of a livid face, one eye in which was discolored by a bruise.

"My little Peggy!" he cried, in a tone that betrayed his gratitude that I did not shun him. "Come to Tomaso!"

Of course I have no memory of this myself, but only repeat what was told to me more than once.

"Not my Tomaso," I screamed, after staring intently and in fear at his unwonted face. "Go 'way! go 'way!" And then I turned and ran, shrieking, to my mother.

He shunned me as well as my mother after that, but it was impossible for him to carry out his purpose in regard to me, for, after eyeing him askance and in doubt for two days, whenever he came near me, I made up my mind that he really was my Tomaso in spite of his changed face; so I not only made advances with the calm assurance of a baby, but I pressed my society upon him with all, or perhaps more than, my usual eagerness.

Nor could I let bygones be bygones, but must satisfy my unbridled curiosity in regard to the changes in his face; and with that end in view asked question after question with all the cruelty of irresponsibility and innocence.

"Wot's 'e matter my Tomaso eye?" "Wot for my Tomaso do dat?" That was because his hand trembled so that he spilled some water he was drinking. "W'y

my Tomaso don't eat some befkist?" It seemed he loathed food.

So I tortured him by a hundred different baby questions, until at last he went to my mother.

"For God's sake, Margaret! help me with that baby. Drink has been my curse. This arm I owe to it; this scar I owe to it; my lonely life I owe to it. I can take my punishment this time; but when she is a year older and a year older yet and learns to know what it means; when I can no longer put her off with evasion—My God! My God!"

His voice trembled and the tears ran down his cheeks.

"All the love I ever had in my soul for human being seems centered on that baby. It seems as if father, mother, and husband were in the love I have for her. And she will despise me: she will, she will!"

"But surely you can stop drinking if you will, Mr. Thomas," said my mother wonderingly.

He stared at her in amazement that she should know so little of the power of the appetite that came upon him.

"Stop it!" he repeated, "if I will? Do you think, Margaret, that I would do it if I could help it?"

"But, Mr. Thomas," said my mother in a puzzled tone, "it seems to me that if you really will you can control yourself. There have been things I would not try to correct in myself, and so they were not corrected; but always what I willed to do I did do. How could it be otherwise?"

She spoke with such an air of simple conviction that he was silent for a while, thinking it over. Finally he shook his head hopelessly.

"I have tried, Margaret; do not suppose I have not."

"Ah," said my mother, "it is because you have tried that you have not accomplished your purpose. I would not try."

"Not try? But what then?"

"Forgive me for speaking so to you who might be my father," said my mother, "but I know that when I say to myself that I will try, I mean that I am leaving the matter still open; but if I say I will, then I close it. Why not say to yourself that you will not drink again, instead of saying you will try not to?"

"Before Heaven! I will sign a pledge."

"I would not," replied my mother earnestly; "for that will mean that you are expecting some help outside of yourself. Give yourself no loophole; say you will not, and rely on yourself."

"At least when the time comes around again watch me and keep me from the madness by your kind words."

"No," said my mother firmly, "I will not, Mr. Thomas; you shall depend on no one but yourself. You are not weak in other things; you can control yourself; I know you can."

When he turned and walked away from her she stood and watched him, holding her breath at her own audacity. She had talked with the confidence of a child, out of a child's limited experience.

When the year came around again and my Tomaso began to be restless and uneasy and to be constantly moistening his lips with his tongue, my mother furtively watched him, determined to cling around his knees and plead with him before she would let him go again.

Finally he went to her, holding my little hand tightly in his as if he were afraid I would escape him. His eyes were wild and his face drawn.

"Margaret," he said hoarsely, "God knows I am doing what I can, but if you do not help me I shall have to yield. You don't know what it is to have ten thousand devils dragging at you or you would have pity on me."

"You need no one's pity," answered my mother tenderly, sure now that she had been right; "for you are winning the fight with your own will. If you had

needed anything I could do or give, you would not have come to me, but would have run away. You have won now if only you knew it; your will is victor. Stop fighting a beaten enemy, who can only win now by making you misunderstand yourself."

She spoke with such conviction, such sweet, womanly earnestness, that he stared at her in wonder, and began to search his own inner consciousness.

"Margaret," he cried at last, "how did you come by so much wisdom? It seems as if you were right. But give me a bit of advice since you have guided me right so far; what shall I do now?"

"Take Peggy to the pond and give her her swimming lesson," answered my mother joyously.

So I went to the pond with Tomaso, dancing with joy, took off my frock and my little chemise, which were the only garments I wore in the summer weather, and took my lesson in swimming.

Two weeks later Tomaso disappeared in the old sudden way, and was gone two days, my mother a prey to despair and grief, meanwhile, and Abner and Jane sardonic.

He returned his own bright-eyed, alert self, and hastened to my mother, who was churning at the time.

"Margaret," he said, "I have been to beard the lion in his den. I was so sure of that will of mine which you discovered for me that I could not rest until I tried it. I went to the old places and drank the old vile stuff; and came away from it without a wrench."

My mother stood pale and trembling as she listened, thinking of the terrible chance he had taken; and she could not say a word when he had ceased speaking, but set to at the churning again, her wide-open eyes speaking for her.

"There is no need of fright, Margaret," he said earnestly; "I am my own master now——" "Hey! my Tomaso!" interposed my shrill voice, as I ran up and

hurled myself at him. "Well, anyhow," he laughed, "I'll acknowledge no other masters but Peggy and myself."

And that was the last of his drunkenness; though the name of reprobate clung to him to the end of his life. Indeed, neither his gentle, upright nature nor my mother's industry and manifest purity, nor my baby innocence ever won those narrow, self-righteous folk from calling us reprobate, harlot, and bastard.

In the main, however, we were little troubled by the outside world, but lived our own peculiar lives without concerning ourselves with the opinions of others.

It was a long time, it is true, before the men of the neighborhood could be made to understand that my mother really meant to be pure in conduct; and occasionally to the last she was obliged to repel the insulting advances that were made toward her.

If Tomaso had known of this I think that though he had but one arm for effective use, he would have made the real reprobates of that vicinity know that it was a singularly muscular member. But my mother very carefully kept such things to herself, feeling quite capable of taking care of herself.

CHAPTER VIII

A THEORY ON BABIES

WHATEVER my mother's life might have been in those early days—and I know there were hard and bitter places in it—mine was one of unalloyed delight.

There we were on a big farm, practically shut off from the world so far as I was concerned, and with the most charming things going on all the while. There were colts and calves and chickens to watch and grow up with; there were horses for me to ride, while my Tomaso walked by my side, his strong hand gripping my skirt unknown to me; there were brooks to paddle in and a big, clear pond to swim in; there were berries and nuts to gather and to eat my fill of; there was fruit in plenty.

What did it matter to my unsophisticated palate that there was never an ounce of fresh meat on the table? Ham I would not eat, so I hardly knew what the taste of meat was like. I was an unconscious vegetarian and was perfectly satisfied to be one.

My Tomaso was a man of theories—bless him! He not only knew how to develop the muscles of the body, having been a gymnast, but he had a theory on the subject. This theory he had learned from the father of a family of German acrobats that had been one of the star features of the circus to which he was attached. This theory he unfolded earnestly to my wondering mother.

"You see, Margaret," he said to her when I was about three months old, "you want the baby to be strong like a boy, so that she can take care of herself; don't you?"

"Certainly, if it is good for a boy to be strong, I don't see why it is not just as good for a girl to be."

My mother meant that I should be strong in other ways, but she was never one to confuse one idea by jostling it with another; so she said no more at that time.

"Well," said my Tomaso, "this Hermann I have told you about said he had brought up his youngest girl according to the plan of a famous German scientist; and certainly she was a wonder physically."

"And her health was good?" asked my mother, who had a vague notion that perhaps the muscular development might have been gained at the expense of health.

"Good? That child could eat nails and digest them. She never was sick. I never knew her to have a cold; and I tell you a traveling show gets to know something about exposure."

"And the plan?" queried my mother.

"Simplicity itself—begin with the baby; develop the muscles of the baby. Don't wait."

"But how old a baby?" demanded my mother, making up her mind that no experiments should be tried on me. She did not then know my Tomaso well enough to be sure that he would not be ready to sacrifice me to some mad theory.

"A day old. Now don't look as if you thought me crazy, Margaret; I am not going to suggest a thing that can harm little Peggy. You see the idea is this: Most babies, as soon as they are born, are bundled up so that they can move even their arms and legs only a little, although they show how much they want to by the enjoyment they have the minute you undress them and let them kick."

"Yes, I have noticed that with Peggy," assented my mother; "although she was never bundled up as most babies are, and as the old woman at the poorhouse said

she ought to be. I didn't have the things, and Peggy had to go without."

"Let her thank Heaven for that. And don't be so foolish as to bundle her up now. This man said that he let their baby roll around out of doors when she was a month old, without any clothes on, when it was warm weather, and when it was cold it always slept out of doors."

"That I will do willingly," cried my mother warmly; for she was ever a believer in all the fresh air possible to get.

"Then off with her clothes and out of doors with her this minute," said my Tomaso joyfully. "She won't take cold; I'll swear she won't. Think of how warm the weather is. Besides I will throw a blanket down there for her to lie on."

My mother was frightened at that, but thought the matter over, took courage to try finally; and I went out of doors in a warm corner where no one ever came to be shocked by such a sight as a nude baby of two months.

But that was only the beginning; for while I lay out in the balmy air, taking in health through every square inch of me, my Tomaso went on to expound his theory.

"Just look at that little body out there!" he said, pointing at me; "do you realize that it is a complete human being and only needs development? Do you realize that it has muscles and nerves and bones just as you and I have, but in a different and less advanced condition?"

"Yes, of course."

"And you know that time will bring that development?"

"Yes, I know that."

"But you know too, that if you did something to prevent that child from moving at all it would never develop either muscles or nerves or anything else; that it would die in fact; don't you?"

"Yes, I know that too."

"Then doesn't it stand to reason that if you help that baby in the right way, instead of just leaving it alone, it will develop more rapidly, and develop better?"

"I don't know that it will develop better, Mr. Thomas. It seems to me that such a tender thing might be better off let alone to go the way Nature intended it to."

"Then you know what Nature intended, do you?" he asked with a twinkle in his eye.

"No, I don't," answered my mother, laughing; too honest to contend when she could not give a reason for doing so.

"The fact is," said my Tomaso, "that we interfere with Nature all the time and then expect her to do her work just the same. Look at Peggy's hands and feet going like perpetual motion! See how her whole body is in motion! Not a little while, but all the time. Yet folks will put long, heavy frocks and underclothes on babies, to say nothing of coats and shawls, in the hottest weather, so that the poor creatures can't move when they are all the time wanting to with all their might. And don't they generally, if they are a bit well off, hold the poor little creatures in their strong arms? Folks seem to think that because a baby is a little thing, it is therefore necessary to be forever coddling it."

"It seems odd for you to know so much about babies," said my mother in her wonder.

His face darkened and he turned away for a moment. My mother saw that she had unwittingly touched upon an unhealed wound; but before she could find the right word to say, he looked at her again with a gentle smile on his rugged face.

"I once had a baby of my own," he said. "I guess that's why I'm so hungry for this one."

"I am sorry——" began my mother. He interrupted her.

"You need not be. Wife and baby died years ago;

but you have brought me the only medicine that could do me any good. Well, what this Hermann did with his girl was to begin and assist Nature instead of hindering her; that was all. The baby wanted exercise for arms and legs and body, and he gave it regularly, just as you would feed or wash your baby."

There was more discussion before my mother yielded, but yield she finally did and unconditionally; and I took my exercises twice a day or sometimes oftener.

And I grew and grew, not in fat, as babies so often do, but in size and in strength; so much so that Jane Hackett was moved to say:

"It takes a nameless brat to live and grow hearty."

One would hardly think of an isolated New England farm as an ideal place for a child, but the Hackett farm was certainly a paradise for me. I don't know how life could hold more for a child than it did for me; and it was my Tomaso who made it so.

I was with him all the time until evening came, when I became mother's little Peggy. Jane Hackett disliked me, but I have often thought since that if crabbed Abner Hackett had not been afraid of his wife's sneers he would have been kind to me.

My mother, in her anxiety to make me all she would have me, would have begun my education very soon, but my Tomaso pleaded with her not to try to teach me out of books until I was at least six years old. Said he:

"I find raw turnips very good and wholesome food, but you would never have thought of giving them to Peggy when she was a year old; her stomach was not ready to digest them. Well, it seems to me, it is foolish to go cramming facts into a child's brain until it is ready to digest them."

"Maybe you are right," answered my mother.

"I feel sure I am. Think of her little arms! Would you set her the task of churning until they are strong enough? No, you would develop the muscles,

wait for the bones to grow, give her time to get more height."

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, give her little brain a chance. It isn't what you'll put into her brain that will benefit her, but the use she will be able to make of what is put there. I say teach her to think. Tell her things and encourage her to ask questions. I'll tell her the things I know."

So until I was eight years old instead of six that is the way I was educated, getting a body that was a perfect marvel of health and strength, and learning no more out of books than how to read easy sentences, and how to add and subtract.

But I knew a horse from his nose to his heels, as my Tomaso used to say. I knew birds by their notes and by their flight, trees by their leaves or their bark, or by the way their limbs branched; nature, in fact, was the book I first learned to read from; and I never learned anything for itself, but only for its relation to something else.

When I was three years old a four-mile walk was nothing to me, and my little feet were so calloused over the sole that wheat stubble was nothing to them, nor gravel nor even the dewberry vines that crept over the stony pastures where the horses grazed.

I often wonder how my Tomaso found the time to do all he did for me without neglecting his appointed work, which was the care of the horses; but I think he worked while I played at the things he wished me to know. I suppose, for example, that he taught me to ride while he was breaking or training horses. I was as much at home on a horse's back, I think, as I was on the earth. I could ride standing up or lying down or sitting.

My Tomaso had rigged up a sort of gymnasium in the wagon-house loft, where he had a carpenter shop and

did odd jobs of repairing, being a kind of handy man on the farm.

There were a horizontal bar, parallel bars, and a rope hanging from the peak of the roof. On these I exercised—played, as I thought; and I sometimes wonder if ever there was a girl with such muscles as I had.

As for handsprings, cartwheels, handstands, walking on my hands, standing on my head, why they were as easy for me, to use my Tomaso's delighted expression, as if I had been born upside down. As for my back, it was like India rubber.

What wonder that life was a simple ecstasy to me! I can remember many a cold winter's morning jumping out of bed at the first streaks of dawn, throwing the window wide open, and breathing in the electrified air for the passionate joy of it. Aye! and many such a morning have I stripped and run out to roll in the white snow.

Oh, Heaven! what life can be! and what we make of it by our ignorance! What trouble and expense we are at to manufacture stimulants and intoxicants for our injury! what pains we take to avoid the most glorious stimulant, the most superb intoxicant in the world—pure, fresh air!

CHAPTER IX

MERCILESS CHILDHOOD

IT was the twenty-fifth of September, 1859; I was eight years old; I was fitted out with an entirely new suit of clothes, namely: unbleached muslin drawers, with generous tucks to accommodate my rapid growth, unbleached muslin chemise, and a calico frock.

I was barefooted and bareheaded. Under my left arm were a new slate and a new spelling book; my right hand was in the left hand of my Tomaso. Together we walked into the district schoolhouse, up the aisle between the benches filled with children, staring at me as if I had been a wild beast, and straight to the schoolmaster's desk.

How frightened I was at the thought of being with so many children! I, who had spent all my little life with my mother and my Tomaso, and who had hardly seen another child.

I say I was frightened; I suppose I was, for my heart beat hard and fast, and when, after some conversation with the schoolmaster, my Tomaso whispered a good-by to me and left me, I had much ado not to turn and run after him; but I did not run after him, nor move an inch. I stood just where he had left me, my head up, my chest out, my feet planted sturdily apart.

The schoolmaster looked down at me over his desk and after his keen black eyes had searched my big gray ones for a moment, he smiled in a kindly, reassuring way, and calling me up to him, began to question me concerning my studies.

He seemed surprised at the little I knew, and an audible titter went over the room as he questioned me. I felt so ashamed that I wanted to run home never to return to the school again; but Mr. Denton cried, "Silence!" in such a tone as hushed the noise at once.

"If Margaret will only study hard," he added, his sharp eyes flitting with meaning from one face to another, "some of you who laugh the loudest now, will be left behind."

How grateful I was to him for those words! and did I not make up my mind there and then to study hard enough to justify them? Nevertheless, I felt very badly when he placed me with children who must have been two years younger than I, and who looked younger because they were all so much smaller than I.

Notwithstanding my discomfiture, however, there was an exhilaration in being with so many children that soon reconciled me to my place in the school; and I was secretly rejoicing in the hum and life about me, when a piece of paper fluttered from somewhere down upon the desk in front of me.

I looked curiously around at my nearest neighbors; they were all studying intently. Then I looked at the paper and saw that something was printed on it.

BASTARD.

I knew what it meant, for Jane Hackett had taken occasion to call me so many times recently; indeed, until my Tomaso had learned of the fact, and had told her in tones that scared her, I fancy, that she must not do it again. Nevertheless I had asked what that word meant, and mother had told me.

So now I sat trembling and breathing hard, until I felt the tears coming. Some of them fell on my spelling book before I could check them; but check them I did, for I could hear suppressed giggles behind me.

Worst of all, however, my little heart was so full and my mind so taken with my sorrow that I could not learn

my lesson; so that when I was called upon to recite, instead of covering myself with glory as I had fully intended to do, I failed miserably and had to listen to Mr. Denton say with a frown:

"I expected better things of you, Margaret."

Finally recess came, and, although the sting of that nasty bit of paper was not gone yet, I fully expected to make some friends among those delightful children—delightful because children—and so ran out as joyously as the rest.

The boys started at once to play as if they were taking up the serious business of their lives, while the girls gathered together in small groups to look at me; whispering among themselves and giggling to my great discomfort.

The boys were playing a game which I afterwards learned they called Pas, and which was a sort of leapfrog apparently, but in fact quite different; for only one boy bent his back, while all the other boys in turn jumped over him; and he stood sidewise to them, increasing the distance from the mark they jumped from, as soon as they had all jumped over him.

This was very fascinating to me, and I would have given a good deal to have been invited to join in the game, for I knew I could jump as well as the best of them. But the boys seemed to have forgotten that there were any creatures but boys in the world, so with a sigh I walked over to a girl who had caught my eye because of her evident leadership.

She was about twelve years old and the most fussily dressed girl in the school, where the rule was great simplicity. She stared at me in surprise as I walked toward her, then made a grimace and said something to the girls near her, which made them break out into a giggle.

If I had known how to turn and go the other way I would have done so, but I felt myself committed to see the thing through, and, therefore, with a face that

I know was crimson, I walked up to this girl, and said:

"Aren't you going to play some game?"

The girl stared at me with her chin up and her eyes half closed, and then with a slow, backward bend of her head turned her back on me and addressed her companions.

"Did you ever! what impudence!"

I have seen women do the same thing since, but it was my first experience in such ways, and I was crushed. I could not even get angry, but turned away with a dark cloud of despair hanging over me.

If I had known then what a Pariah was, I should have had a word with which to describe my situation. I was shunned; I who had been the most welcome thing in the lives of two such wonderful persons as my mother and my Tomaso. No wonder I fought hard against the constant impulse to run back to that dear farm.

If the recess had been long enough, perhaps I should not have been able to hold out against my desire to throw myself on my mother's bosom; but the bell rang while I stood moodily watching the boys, and I went in and took my seat.

I was lesson perfect in the next session, and my heart swelled with delight at Mr. Denton's pleased "That's what I like." I had made up my mind to get my lesson no matter what stings were in my heart; and I had done it.

I had steeled myself, too, to whatever my schoolmates might choose to do, just as I had learned to do with Jane Hackett; so that when noon came I stifled all hopes of making any friends among the children, and ate my luncheon in woeful loneliness on the schoolhouse steps.

As a solace I went into the school, after I had lunched, and brought out a new reader which had been given me by Mr. Denton, and for which I was to bring him twenty

cents the next day. It was filled with the most charming pictures, and I was eager to look over it.

It seemed, however, that what my would-be tormentors wished was that I should give some signs of my misery; and when I did not do so, they were vexed and sought about for some way of making me realize that they did not mean to tolerate me.

I cannot say how such thoughts found their way into those innocent little minds, but I fancy the children were only making a practical application of the words they had heard from their elders concerning my mother and me, and really had no strong animus against me.

Well, I hunted out a tree a little way from the schoolhouse, climbed upon a stone wall under it, and proceeded to make myself as happy as I could with my book, though I could not help casting furtive glances at the children who were playing about the edge of a small pond about twenty-five yards from where I sat.

"Give me that book," cried a voice suddenly, and the reader was snatched out of my hand; "and tell me your father's name."

It was Delia Morris, the twelve-year-old girl I had spoken to in the morning. All the pugnacity of my nature was roused in an instant by this sudden and unexpected aggression. I leaped to the earth, crying:

"Give me my book! give it to me!"

I know I must have looked fierce, perhaps formidable, for the girl turned and ran with my book toward the pond. I sprang after her and overtook her in a moment, for I was a very deer in running. She felt my hand touch her and instantly threw the book with all her strength toward the pond.

Whether or not she meant to have the book reach the water, I don't know, but reach it it did, falling with a splash almost into the middle of the pond, amidst a chorus of laughter from the children.

"There!" she cried, facing me tauntingly, "go get your old book!"

"You'll go get it," I screamed, beside myself with anger; and to the dismay and amazement of the children and to the horror of Delia herself, I caught her up in my arms and fairly ran with her to the pond.

CHAPTER X

THE USE OF STRENGTH

DELIA MORRIS struggled desperately to free herself, but the arms that my Tomaso had trained were strung with muscles of steel, notwithstanding my arms were as round and dimpled as one could wish to see.

I bore the frightened, screaming, struggling girl into the pond until I felt the water at my knees, when I threw her as far from me as I could; and she fell with a tremendous splash at full length in the water.

I was conscious of all the horrified children who had trooped after us to the edge of the pond, but for the first time in my life my anger had control of me, and I thought of nothing but the injustice I had been subjected to. I waited with flashing eyes fixed on the girl who floundered so ignominiously in the water, screaming and choking by turns.

"Bring me my book!" I cried to her the instant she was on her feet; "bring it to me!"

She stared at me half in bewilderment, half in terror; and I suppose she recognized the demon of wrath she had aroused in me, for she waded out and brought me my book, amid the jeering laughter of those fickle children, who a few minutes before had hailed her as their leader.

But whether they laughed or cried, jeered or hailed, was nothing to me. My sense of justice had been outraged, and I was ready to face the whole school and do battle to the bitter end, reckless then whether they were my friends or foes.

How the children might have treated me after that,

I do not know, for I had not yet turned about to wade ashore when a sudden silence fell on them, and when I looked, there was Mr. Denton coming rapidly from the schoolhouse. I do not know whether he saw the occurrence or one of the children had told him of it.

I was in a very pugnacious mood, and, I believe, would have hailed an encounter with the whole school with a certain sort of pleasure, but there was a masterful sternness in Mr. Denton's face that had a decidedly calming effect on me. I think this was not because I was afraid of him, but only because I had been strongly drawn to him, and did not like the thought of losing his good opinion.

"Delia," he said sharply, "what is the matter?" I suppose he spoke to her because she presented such a distressful appearance, with her fine clothes all wet and her face convulsed with sobs.

"She threw me in the water," sobbed Delia, with a spiteful glance at me. I hung my head, not in shame or remorse, but in sorrow as I saw the stern face turn upon me. I knew he was studying me during the short silence that followed.

"She threw you in!" he exclaimed, after his examination of me; "that little girl? What does she mean?" he demanded turning to one of the older girls of sixteen who had come up after the occurrence.

"I saw the new girl pick Delia up and carry her into the water. I was too far away to do anything," was the answer.

He looked at me curiously as if studying to see where my strength lay; then turned to Delia to ask the question I was afraid would not come; for I did wish to stand well with the kind-eyed teacher.

"Why did she throw you into the water, Delia?"

Delia pouted and was silent. Mr. Denton turned to one of the other girls, one he knew from experience would talk, I suppose, and asked her the same question.

"Because Delia threw her new book into the pond."

"Ah! and why did she do that? I want to know all about it."

And I think the little girl was dying to tell from the way she started in and gave the whole story, dwelling with some pleasure, it seemed to me, on anything that seemed to tell against my part in the fracas.

"Is this correct, Delia?" he demanded when the story had been told.

"Yes, sir."

"Is it correct, Margaret?"

"Yes, sir."

"Delia," he said, in the tones of one who never contemplated such a thing as disobedience, "go home at once and get into dry clothes. When you return to school bring the money to pay for a new reader. Margaret, come with me!"

"Won't she get a licking, though!" I heard one of the girls say as I walked away by the side of Mr. Denton.

Whip me! I knew such things were done, for I had seen Mr. Denton administer punishment to a naughty boy in the morning, and had been horrified, for I had never been brought into contact with such a thing before.

I looked up into the calm face of the schoolmaster, my heart throbbing as it had never throbbed before. What should I do? If he whipped me I knew that I should become like a wild beast if my heart did not break.

I had half a mind to run away, and I think I would have made a sudden bolt for the woods that came up to the roadside if I had not been afraid that my Tomaso would think such a course cowardly. Consequently I walked by the side of the silent man and entered the schoolhouse with him. But at the head of the aisle I stopped and cried out:

"Are you going to whip me?"

He looked down into my face with eyes that seemed to know every phase of childish nature; for even my Tomaso's eyes never were gentler than his grew as he studied me. He put his hand on my curly head and answered:

"No, I am going to talk with you, Margaret."

I would not go into these details only that the few words he said to me that day went very far toward forming my character. When I think how potent words spoken to a child are, I wonder that so many grown persons will be so careless in dealing out injustice and indifference in carelessly spoken phrases.

Mr. Denton took me to my own seat, and seated himself on the desk as he talked to me, his hand sometimes stroking my head, sometimes patting my hand.

"It seems you are very strong, Margaret," were his first words.

I looked into his face for a moment, and the tears filled my eyes. I had not expected, even yet, anything less than a scolding.

"I suppose so; yes, sir," I faltered.

"Gentleness and forbearance should always go with strength; don't you think so?"

I did think so because my Tomaso always preached that doctrine. He always told me that the real advantage of being strong was that, knowing your power, you could afford to endure what a weaker person would be driven to resent. But all that had been theory up to now.

"Yes, sir," I answered; "I am very sorry."

Then it was that he stroked my head; and I remember his hand slipped under my chin and held my face up so that he might look into it as long as he chose. Ah, what a good man he was! I believe now that it was with him as it was with my Tomaso—the father that was in him was going out to the fatherless child! God bless him!

"Yes, you are sorry, I know; and sorry for the right

thing to be sorry for," he said. "You are a good little girl, Margaret; and you and I are going to be great friends."

"Thank you, sir," I said softly, not knowing quite what to say, but full of gratitude; and I leaned over and put my head against his arm. How I longed to be loved! and how grateful I ever was for it!

"I think you have a very fierce temper, Margaret," he said presently; but there was a gentle smile on his face, so that the sting of the words was all taken out.

"Mother says I have," I answered penitently.

"And did she tell you it was a good thing to have?" he asked.

"No, sir," I said wonderingly; "she tells me to conquer it."

"And so you should conquer it; but did Thomas Hackett never tell you that if once you can control a high-spirited horse it is always better and safer and gentler than a horse with a poor spirit?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Well, it is the same way with a human being. Rejoice in your high spirit, but control it; then it will do you good service. Let nothing within yourself control you; be mistress of yourself. There may come times in plenty in your life when you will have to fight for justice, but there never can come a time when you will be right in striking a blow or committing an act of passion. See now! Perhaps what you did to Delia Morris was right; but you did yourself more harm than good because you lost control of yourself. And Delia will not be benefited because she will know that you did what you did because you were in an uncontrollable passion."

I said I understood him, and I did, though I think he did not believe I understood fully what he said. But his plan was to say the right thing at the right time and trust to some of the truth sticking.

Mother and my Tomaso had told me much the same things before, but they had been simple abstractions to me, because in the atmosphere of love and happiness in which I lived I only occasionally fell into a passion; and was always so sorry for it that it seemed like cruelty to preach at the time.

But the words that Elias Denton said to me that day after the most furious passion I had ever fallen into, I never forgot; and many and many a time I had occasion to learn that physical strength and high spirit controlled made a combination that was almost irresistible.

"There is something else I want to say," he went on after a long pause. "At first you may have trouble in making friends; but you must be gentle and yet indifferent, and they will all come around to liking you. By indifferent, I mean that you must be strong in yourself and try to realize that all the happiness there is in the world worth the having comes from inside of you, and not from outside. I wonder if you can understand that?"

"I think so, sir," I answered simply; "you know my mother has had to learn that."

He stared at me with a sudden pity in his eyes, murmured under his breath: "So she has; so she has," and then bent over and kissed me, saying aloud:

"You are going to study hard and learn like a steam engine, aren't you, Margaret?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now let us go out," he said, rising abruptly; "I want to show you a hermit thrush's nest."

I know now that what he wanted to do was to show the scholars that I was not in disgrace, but very much in favor. Again, God bless him!

CHAPTER XI

GIRL VERSUS BOY

I AM not going to dwell on my school days, though there is no time I look back at with more pleasure. Indeed, life was very full for me then; what with school and mother and my Tomaso.

I studied hard, but my Tomaso took good care that I did not neglect my body, so that I grew both broad and tall. I do not remember ever coming to that terrible, lanky condition of girls usually. It seems to me that my width and my length adjusted themselves to each other so that I never was what is called too tall for my age.

As for my school-fellows; it turned out just as Mr. Denton had said. I was good-tempered and conciliatory, and was soon accepted by the girls. Of course there was always a time when someone in a fit of anger would cast an opprobrious name at me; but I had shown several times what I could do when I chose, and no one cared to come to close quarters with me.

With the boys I had a harder time; not because they had either ugly words or ugly feelings for me, but simply on the ground that I was a girl. And, I confess it frankly, the girls had small attraction for me, while the boys drew me as the magnet draws the steel.

I wanted to play with them, and they would not have it. They laughed scornfully when I proposed playing pass or ball or tag or red lion or catch one catch all; so that I had to stand by and look at them, knowing all the time that I could give a good account of myself in any of their games.

But I finally determined that they should let me play with them; for play I must, and it was only occasionally that the girls would enter into any game with any life in it. Indeed, it was considered not at all nice in a girl to want to do the things the boys did; so that the girls usually gathered in groups and talked in whispers and giggles of forbidden things. And oh, how dirty they made some of the things my mother had taught me the beauty and high purpose of!

So one day I pushed my way into the circle of boys just as they were counting off for tag. How well I remember the foolish old jargon! Aina maina mone mi, it began; and from there on had variations according to the will of the boy who counted off.

"I don't see why I can't play too," I said with a positive toss of my head that meant the time had come when I intended to bring the matter to a final issue.

"Oh, get out! we don't want girls. Go on, Billy!"

I turned swiftly on the speaker, Henry Morton—Hank, everybody called him. He was twelve years old, thin and wiry; the best runner among the small boys in the school.

"I'll bet I can beat you running!" I cried. I had often watched him run and had been wild to try conclusions with him. But the idea of an eight-year-old girl, even one as big as I, beating Hank Morton was too absurd to be considered seriously. Everybody laughed and began to push me out of the circle; for time was too valuable to waste.

"I tell you I can," I insisted, bracing myself sturdily so that I was not so easily pushed out as they had anticipated. "I'll race him to the big chestnut and back, and if I don't beat him, I'll——" I stopped because I could think of no forfeit.

"Will you give me your doughnuts if I beat you?" demanded Hank, winking at the others.

"Yes, I will."

"Honor bright?" demanded Hank, a greedy look in his eye.

"Cross my heart," I answered, according to the formula in vogue at the school.

"Come on, fellows!" cried Hank. "Billy, you start us."

"Oh, give her a head start, Hank!" exclaimed one of the boys, who was evidently ashamed to take advantage of a little girl.

"I don't want a head start," I said quickly; "I wouldn't take it. But if I win you'll let me play with you; won't you?"

"Yes, we will," said Billy Graves, who stood ready to start us. "Toe the line! When I say three you go. You're to touch the big chestnut and come back here. Are you ready?"

I don't remember any moment in my life that was to me so important. It seemed to me then as if life itself could not be of as much account as the privilege of playing with those boys. I wondered if I had made a terrible mistake in challenging Hank instead of one of the poorer runners.

And oh, how serene he looked as he stood easily by my side, grinning at the other boys! The girls, too, had been attracted by the prospect of such a race, and I could see them whispering to each other and either giggling or making disdainful grimaces.

Hank was barefooted as well as I, so that there was no advantage as to that; but he wore trousers, turned up to his knees, while I wore a skirt. It was a short skirt, however, and I meant to pull it up if it got in my way.

"All ready!" said Hank gayly.

"Ready!" said I huskily, crouching as my Tomaso had taught me to do, and digging a little hole with my toes for my hindmost foot to brace against.

"Whack on the doughnuts, Hank!" cried one of the boys, facetiously anticipating the result.

"How many are there, Mag?" Hank asked me.

"Two," I answered, wondering why they were so mean as to try to tease me at such a time; but glad for the little respite, too, for while they talked I regained my nerve.

"One! two! three!" said Billy.

And I was off, two yards in the lead at the very start, and making those sinewy legs of mine fly in a way to surprise the spectators. But Hank, taken by surprise at the first, and angry, too, I fancy, strained every muscle to catch up to me.

A quick look back showed me his set face coming nearer. I was quite cool now, and recalled all the wise things my Tomaso had told me about making my head always do as much work as possible.

At the schoolhouse door, as we passed, I saw Mr. Denton standing, watching us. I think he knew everything that took place, although he seemed never to see anything but what he had a fair concern in.

"Go it, Atalanta!" I heard him cry; and I knew the encouragement was for me even though I did not know what he meant by calling me Atalanta.

I smiled at him, but had no breath to speak with.

Hank, in despair at having a girl keep ahead of him, I suppose, put on speed just there and spurted past me.

I could have kept ahead, but I knew that an extra exertion there might lose me the race; and already I felt that it was mine. I could hear the yell that went up from the children behind us as Hank passed me, and I can remember to this day how I was tempted to pass him again just for the sake of a yell like that for me. I have learned since that many a good race is lost through yielding to the temptation to win applause while running.

Hank touched the tree first, but I was close behind him, and was after him without the loss of time he had made in turning; for here my gymnastic training helped

me by teaching me how to touch, turn, and recover with the least loss.

Did you ever try following instead of leading? It is vastly the easier way; which, I suppose, is why so few lead and so many follow in this world. I followed close behind Hank, saving my breath and easing my muscles, until we were half-way back, when I gave a leap that carried me past him.

Mr. Denton was still watching us from the doorway, but I did not dare look at him, though I had the cheering consciousness that he was on my side. I only caught his words:

"Atalanta wins!"

And win I did, touching Billy's outstretched arm fully three yards in front of Hank, to the wonder of everybody, and to the chagrin of Hank, who, not being the most generous of boys, never forgave me for the mortification of that morning.

As for the girls, they gathered about with the boys, as I sat on a big stone, panting and puffing, and stared at me as they would have stared at a wild Indian, or any other remarkable and not altogether lovely thing.

But what did I care for the girls after that! I was to play with the boys. I was to run with them, jump with them, play ball. For Billy, who in a quiet, slow way was the real leader of the younger boys, drawled out:

"By gum! Mag! you done it slick."

It was painfully ungrammatical, of course, but the most eloquent oratory I have heard since has failed to send the thrill of pleasure through me that those words of Billy's did.

The girls, in great scorn of my muscular development, called me Tomboy, and other worse things; but the boys, taking their cue from Billy, said I was a "bully" kind of a girl, and admitted me into all their games.

It was a wonder to them, always, how a girl could be like me; and I know they often eyed me curiously to see

how I was different from other girls, but as Billy once confided to me, the only way I was any different was in being " a blamed sight purttier."

When I first began to wrestle with them was the greatest wonder to them, however; and indeed it was a long time before they could bring themselves to play so rough a game with me.

Hank Morton was the first boy to try with me. I think he had in mind the hope of giving me a fall that would compensate for my defeat of him in the race. I don't believe he ever comprehended how he came to sprawl so suddenly on the grass!

Ah me! what days those were! And there were two years filled with them.

CHAPTER XII

GREAT CHANGES

I WAS nearly ten years old when war broke out between the Northern and Southern States. I shall speak of that terrible conflict only as it influenced my life.

It was some time in April, 1861, that Mr. Denton, in such excitement as I had never before seen him in, stood up on his platform and read from a Boston newspaper the account of the firing on Fort Sumter.

I was stirred and thrilled by the excitement that communicated itself from him to the older boys in the school; though, Heaven knows! the causes of the war were nothing to me except in the vaguest way. What was much to me was that before that month was ended Mr. Denton marched away to the war never to return.

There was a futile attempt to keep the school open, but the farmers were only too ready to have an excuse for keeping home such children as could work, and the middle of May saw the doors of the old schoolhouse closed. Closed forever on me.

I always look back to that time as a fateful one for me as well as for my country; although at the time, excepting for the closing of the school, things seemed to be taking their natural and usual course.

At first everybody talked of the war ending in a few months; but some of the shrewder ones, among them Abner Hackett, saw that the war was likely to be prolonged far beyond the three months for which the first volunteers had been called out.

There was already a demand for horses, and Abner took the chances of the demand increasing, and began to quietly buy up as many as he could get hold of at a low price; and prices of everything were very low in those days.

The horses being in my Tomaso's department particularly, he was kept very busy going about deciding on what to buy and what not. He seemed to need only to run his eye over a horse to know whether it was sound or not.

Well, one wretched day for my mother and me, he decided to buy a stallion known the country round as a man-eater—that is, a particularly vicious brute which had killed two men already and seemed crazed to get at every human being that came near it.

I think my Tomaso had long been wishful to try to tame that stallion, and was glad now when a fair excuse offered to bring it into his hands.

I could not dwell on this part of my story if I would, so keen is the pain I suffer when I recall its details. My Tomaso went to bring home the brute, and was himself brought home, mangled, dying.

I would have given way to frantic cries but for my mother bending her white face over me and whispering:

"You must be quiet for your Tomaso's sake."

Mother nursed him for the little while he remained with us; and I was by his side during the long, weary, hours, my hand in his most of the time. He was in such agonizing pain that he could not talk much, but what he did say was as to our future, showing how little he considered himself.

A short time before he died, he called for his brother and sister-in-law, and with us all there he spoke these words brokenly, indeed, but so plainly that no one could misunderstand:

"Abner and Jane, I know I am dying. I have given you good service for all you have paid me, Abner, so that

the account between us is clean. I shall leave two hundred and sixty dollars; they are in my trunk. I have saved them for my little Peggy, here. Will you give them to her, truly and faithfully, Abner, or must I make a will?"

"She shall have them, Thomas; she shall have them. Make yourself easy."

My Tomaso's money was nothing to me—nothing more than as much gravel from the pit; and my mother only shrank within herself with horror of benefiting by the death of that dearest of friends. As for Abner, I believe he spoke in good faith and meant to acquit himself of his promise; but, though I did not look at her at the time, I am sure that Jane's little eyes sparkled with avarice, and that her thin lips closed on her determination to keep as much of that gold as she could.

"You will need it, Margaret," my Tomaso said to my mother as soon as the others had left us; "you cannot remain here long after I am gone."

Well, we laid him away soon after, and the world seemed very blank to my mother and me as we walked sadly homeward.

If it were not necessary I would not dwell on what followed, and indeed I shall make it as brief as possible. Jane Hackett trumped up all sorts of claims against the dead man's estate, until she had reduced the sum he had left to just twenty dollars.

My mother would not fight, but, with a proud scorn of the other's avarice, saw melt away the money which our friend had destined to enable us to live on in the city while my mother obtained the means of getting a livelihood. And Jane Hackett so hated my mother for her superiority that she could not be content until she had driven us from the farm.

One would suppose that so useful a person as my mother would have been coaxed to remain rather than driven away; but Jane Hackett had nursed her hatred

of my mother for so long that, at last, it seemed to have grown beyond her control.

I was the occasion of the final outbreak; though it must have come out of nothing rather than not come at all; for Jane had fallen into a perfect system of nagging and veiled abuse, which was gradually nearing the point of open outrage.

I had accidentally knocked a milkpan off the shelf on the fence on which it had been set to dry in the sun, and was stooping to pick it up, when I was astounded by a sudden blow on my cheek that made it tingle again.

I was upright in an instant, filled with surprise rather than anger, for it never occurred to me that I had really been struck a blow with intent to hurt me.

There stood Jane Hackett, her face white with wrath and hatred, and her hand raised to strike me again. It was impossible for me to be afraid of the withered creature, and I believe I smiled as I interposed the milkpan between me and her hand, so that she struck it and bruised her knuckles.

Enraged and carried quite beyond herself at that, she caught up the first thing that came to her hand, which happened to be a piece of a bean pole, and would have belabored me with it had I not caught her by the wrists and held her firmly.

I hope I shall never see again such an expression of rage and deadly hatred as I saw on the face of that impotent woman then. She poured out upon me such a flood of half-obscene vituperation as I have never heard equaled. She included my mother and my father in her tirade.

How I felt I cannot describe except by saying that I was half sick with the horror of it; though the smile that had been on my face in amusement was now fixed there and remained to madden her through all her dreadful talk.

My mother came and found us in this way. She must

have heard much before she reached us, but she gave no other sign of it than to be very white in the face. I relaxed my hold in a sort of shame at the sight of that sweet, set face; my mother put her arm about me and stopped the hag in her tirade by a gesture which might have served a queen, it was so imperative and so dignified.

"You have said enough, Mrs. Hackett," she said in an even tone. "It has been plain to me for some time that you wish us to go; you shall not have to wait. I go to-night."

"You can't go too soon for me, you drab!" screamed the woman; and she added more, which it is better to imagine than to be told.

My mother, however, moved away with me as if the other did not exist; and without even asking me the cause of the trouble bade me get together what belonged to me, so that we might make a start as soon as possible.

Abner Hackett came to us while we were thus occupied, and with some mumbled words which were intended as a sort of apology for what had happened, gave my mother her month's wages, which it so happened were just due.

We took no other meal on the farm, unless you might so designate the wild strawberries we picked as we made a short cut through the woods to get to the road.

It would have been easy enough for my mother to obtain a place on any one of a dozen farms in the neighborhood, so well known was her value; but she had made up her mind to go to Boston now, and felt that she was as well prepared as she was ever likely to be.

During her ten years on the farm she had laid by a trifle over one hundred dollars, which with her just paid month's wages, the money that came to us from my dear Tomaso, together with a little that I had come by in one way and another, amounted to quite one hundred and thirty dollars.

We walked to the railroad station and took the cars for B——; for much as my mother wished to get to

Boston quickly she would not waste her money in extravagant fares. She meant to take a sailing vessel for Boston, many such running in those days.

B—— was a wonderful, great city to me, I never having been in any place of more size than our village; and it was hard for me to comprehend that Boston could be much larger.

We spent that night in a respectable but cheap hotel, my mother knowing now how to find such a one, and in the morning we went in search of a schooner about to sail for Boston.

I ought to say, however, that before we went to bed the night of our arrival my mother took me to see the house where my father had been born, and where he had always lived; but my father was nothing but a dream to me, and I could see in the house only the place where the hard-hearted man lived who had refused my mother shelter.

When we went to the docks in search of a vessel to carry us to our destination, we were told to go to the offices of the shipowners; so we procured the addresses of several, and finding them all in the same neighborhood determined to go into the first to make our inquiries.

You may be sure I was all agape to see the marvelous sights of the busy town, and could do nothing but stare whether it was in the streets, on the wharves, or in the offices.

I think it was in the third place we went to make inquiries that I was staring about me, when I saw a gentleman—he seemed an old gentleman to me—drop his wallet as he walked toward an inner office.

I was upon it in an instant and had him by the sleeve. He turned and looked from my face to the wallet in my hand, understanding the matter at once. He took the wallet and smiled very kindly at me.

"Why, that's a good little girl," he said; "and a pretty one, too. You must take something to remem-

ber me by," taking a tiny gold piece from his vest pocket. "And I must have a kiss to remember you by."

He had a kindly face, and I was nothing loath to be kissed by him, nor yet to take his gold piece, the sight of which was attractive to me; so I took the money in my hand, and held up my face to be kissed; but ere my fingers were fairly gripped on the coin, and before his lips could touch mine, I was snatched away from him and the money taken out of my hand by my mother, who held me as if from contamination.

CHAPTER XIII

LUXURY NO TEMPTATION

I STARED up at my mother's face in surprise at her vehemence. I had never seen such pride depicted on her sweet face.

"Here is your money, sir!" she said curtly. "My child may not have it."

He stammered a confused apology, all the while his eyes studying alternately my mother's face and mine, his brows knit in the frown of one puzzled by a fleeting resemblance.

My mother, after proudly enduring his gaze for a few moments, made a hurried movement and led me swiftly from the office, making no further attempt to prosecute there the inquiries she had come to make.

I asked no questions, knowing well enough that my mother would never conduct herself in that way without sufficient cause; but I could not help wondering why she was so agitated and why she held my hand in such a convulsive grasp.

"He was your grandfather," my mother said as she hurried along.

Then I understood her feelings, for she had told me the story of her interview with him, and of course all my sympathies were with my mother; I squeezed her hand in token of my present sympathy, but said nothing.

In her agitation my mother had no defined purpose in hurrying away from where she had met Captain Shaw; but the meeting had recalled so much that was painful to

her to dwell on that she was distracted from her object and was seeking her self-control.

Neither of us heard, or if we heard, heeded the sound of footsteps behind us until they were so close and had so pursuing a sound that we both turned involuntarily. Captain Shaw was close upon us.

"A word with you, please, madam!" he exclaimed as we turned our heads.

It was a small, deserted by-street into which my mother had turned, so that there was no one to see the singular sight of the respectable merchant in pursuit of a woman and child in the coarse, unfashionable garments of the farm.

My mother stopped instantly and faced him, drawing me close to her and so waiting for him to speak. He was breathing hard from his unwonted exertion, and for a moment said nothing, though his keen eyes searched our faces closely.

"Why did you refuse to let your child accept money from me?" he asked at length.

"Because it was my right to do so," she replied; and I wondered, even knowing what I did, to see how haughtily she held herself.

"Have we met before?" he asked.

"Always suspicious," she answered scornfully. "You know we have met before; else why have you followed me?"

"Then I was right," he cried with an eagerness of manner that betrayed itself in spite of a manifest desire on his part to seem quite calm; "you are the woman who——"

"I am she who was turned from your house because of her misfortunes," she interrupted.

"I was hard and suspicious, I know," he answered. "I have been very sorry since. Will you not come there again now, so that we may talk freely and without danger of interruption? I have much to say to you;

and I think you will not be sorry. Come for the sake of your child," he added, as he seemed to notice the premonitory signs of a proud refusal.

"For the sake of *my* child?" she demanded, with the nearest approach to bitterness I had ever known in her.

Captain Shaw looked uneasily at me, flushed, bit his lip, and said in a low, hesitating tone:

"For the sake of Mortimer's child, then."

A sigh broke from my mother's lips as if it had been the expression of an emotion that had been suppressed almost too long.

"Do you wish me to go at once?" she asked in the old, gentle tone so characteristic of her, and which it seemed to me must win the love of whomever heard it.

"Yes, at once. Let us go together. May I walk by the side of your child?"

There was a plea in the words and tone, and yet even I could see that he held my mother aloof; as if I were one consideration, she another.

"Peggy," said my mother, all softness now, "this is your grandfather. Give him your hand and walk with him. I will walk behind, because there is not room for us to walk together."

I looked into my mother's eyes before I obeyed her, for I wanted to know if possible what was meant by this change; but I gained no other information than the assurance that I would please her best by doing as she bade me.

I went reluctantly from her side, and thrust my hand into that of my grandfather, held out to me. It closed on mine with a quickness and a pressure that made me think of my Tomaso, and which softened me at once; for I confess I felt hard and rebellious toward the man who had been so cruel to my mother; who had doubted her truth and her purity.

"What is your name?" he asked, as he walked away with me without a glance to see that my mother followed.

"Margaret Grant."

"Margaret Grant!" he repeated in a low tone, and looked back as if he would question my mother, but changed his mind, and asked me another question, his voice quite coaxing and tender. "How old are you?"

"I was ten last June."

"Ten!" he murmured, evidently making a mental calculation; "yes, of course. You are a big girl for ten, it seems to me; and you look very well."

"I am always well; I never was sick."

"Why, that's a pleasant thing to have to say, Margaret; not many of us can say that much."

"My Tomaso always said folks wouldn't be sick if they were not so foolish about eating."

"Your Tomaso! who is he?"

"He's dead," I answered, my eyes filling and my voice breaking. "He was the best man that ever lived."

"Oh!" murmured my grandfather. "I suppose you've been to school."

"Ever since I was eight."

"Two years. Then you don't know very much, do you?"

"Not very much out of books, but I know about other things." I was much afraid he would think mother and my Tomaso had not given me a fair chance. "Anyhow, I stood at the head of class; and Mr. Denton said I would be as far along as any of them in a year more. I skipped two classes."

But there is no need to rehearse all our talk. I was shy at first, and answered his questions briefly in the way of a child; but he was so kind and tender that by the time we had reached the house I was talking freely with him, volunteering a great deal of information about the way I had been living on the farm.

I think now that he must have been considerably surprised at some of the things I told him; for I naturally spoke of the things that interested me most, and what

should they be but my contests in running, jumping, wrestling, and the like with the boys.

But whether he approved or disapproved he listened sympathetically, and even searched in his memory for his own boyhood's games and trials so that he might relate some incident to prove that he understood some of my references.

Finally we reached the house which my mother had described to me more than once; and, my hand being tenderly clasped in my grandfather's, I somehow had the feeling that I was going home.

More than once I had turned to look at mother, and she had always smiled encouragingly at me, as if to bid me continue as I was doing, but it had seemed to me that she increased the distance between herself and us, as if she would make my grandfather understand that she neither wished to hear nor could hear what passed between us.

When we reached the door of the house, however, my mother came quickly forward and took my hand in hers, though without anything in her manner to indicate that hardness of pride which had moved her at the first.

I had fully expected to be taken into the same little room where my mother had had her first interview with my grandfather, and I was consequently greatly disappointed to be ushered into a large, cool parlor.

I was very greatly impressed with the richness and elegance of the furnishings, which, to an eye accustomed to the austere plainness of a New England farmhouse, seemed the very acme of luxuriousness. I know I stared about me in wonder; but when I turned my eyes on my mother to exchange sympathetic glances with her, I grew suddenly serious, for it was plain that she was all tense, like one prepared for a terrible struggle.

"I would like to talk with you," said my grandfather, who up to that moment had not addressed my

mother since taking my hand. "Shall we leave little Margaret here while we retire to another room?"

"No," my mother answered steadily enough, but in a strained voice; "whatever is said must be said before her. I have told her everything about myself, so that she is prepared to listen to you."

I learned afterward that mother suspected why he had brought us to his house.

"Everything?" he demanded half indignantly.

"Everything. I was reared in ignorance. It may be I have told her too much, but I think not. At any rate, she knows that she has no right to her father's name; and she knows that you refused to believe my story when I came to you nearly eleven years ago."

"You taught her to hate me?"

"Can you not judge for yourself? But you did not ask me here to say these things to me."

"She tells me her name is Margaret Grant," he said, as if willing to put off declaring his purpose. "Are you married, then?"

"I am not married. My father cast me off, so I took the name of Grant."

"The child spoke of a man whom she called Tomaso. Who was he?"

My mother's eyes lighted up and she took a step nearer to him.

"He was a good true man who knew my story, but who believed in my purity. He was my devoted friend."

My grandfather was abashed and ashamed; I know he was. Again he had permitted himself unjust and ungenerous suspicions of my mother, and she had rebuked him. His tone was more conciliatory when he spoke again.

"Margaret seems to have been well brought up; she and I had a very interesting talk together. She has something of her father's looks, as he was when a boy."

"You refused to believe me when I came to you before

she was born," my mother said. "Why are you so sure now that Mortimer was her father?"

"I know you think me very hard and suspicious," he answered, "but you must consider that I knew nothing of you up to the moment you came here. A few weeks after you were here there came a respectable young farmer from your neighborhood, seeking you."

"Henry Secor," murmured my mother.

"Yes, that was his name. He asked me for news of you, and I told him what had occurred between us. He was very violent in his denunciation of me, but I excused him for that, considering the nature of his feelings for you. He told me how he had offered you marriage so that I might know in what esteem he held you; and he told me so much about your unblemished life up to the period of Mortimer's visit to your father's farm that I went to the vicinity and made inquiries."

Mother listened in silence, and maintained silence after he had ceased speaking, for whether he told her so or not she knew that the result of his inquiries must have been favorable to her.

"After that," he went on, "I sought you everywhere. I even sent detectives in search of you, because I wished to do right by Mortimer's child."

"I lived through the winter in this town," mother said in explanation. "In the spring I tried to walk to Boston, but was not permitted to do so. They took me to the poorhouse, where Margaret was born."

My grandfather shuddered, but my mother smiled at me with a passionate sweetness, and put her arm about me so as to hold me closer to her; and so she held me throughout the interview. She was seated, but I stood by her side.

"Well," said my grandfather, with a gesture as if he would push all that dreadful time away from him, "that is over, and we can begin now in a better way. I mean to take care of Margaret now."

He smiled at me and held out his hand toward me, but I pressed closer to mother and turned a frightened face toward her.

"In what way will you take care of her?" my mother asked, a suspicion of a break in her voice, and her arm pressing more tightly about me.

"I have anticipated this time," he said, "and can answer you definitely. I am an altogether childless man now, and quite alone in the world. My only daughter died five years ago."

"Oh!" murmured my mother pityingly; "that pretty, well-looking young lady who admitted me that night?"

"Yes," he answered, shaking his head sadly; "she caught cold and was taken suddenly. Then, more than ever, I wanted to find you, but could not. However, that is all over. What I mean to do is this: I may not, for the child's sake, acknowledge her as Mortimer's. That would be to stamp her at once. But I will formally adopt her as my own child, and will treat her as such."

My mother bent her head over me, and I could feel her whole body quiver. I wondered at her emotion, and clung close to her to show my sympathy. My grandfather waited for her to speak, but when she did not do so, went on:

"By doing this I can give her my name, and no one need be any the wiser. I am sure she will be discreet enough never to speak of her unhappy past."

"You may trust Margaret entirely," my mother said.

They were speaking as if the matter were settled, and I could not help thinking how delightful it would be to live in that beautiful house, and how happy we should be there. Indeed, I remember thinking how beautiful mother would look in such a lovely silk gown as I had seen in a dressmaker's window when we were walking about the streets.

"I am sure of that," he said, smiling at me and this time receiving a smile in return. "I am pleased with her. You have brought her up well. As for you——" He stopped and seemed to reflect.

"As for me," my mother repeated after him, her eyes fixed on him in a strangely anxious way.

"You shall receive a fixed sum adequate to your needs —sufficient to keep you in comfort, even in luxury."

"Yes," my mother said in a low tone.

"Of course, it does not need that I should say that for your child's sake you should remove to as distant a place as possible; say Boston."

"Go away from her?" my mother asked.

"Ask yourself," he argued calmly, "if it would be for her good that you should be known as her mother. Would not your story soon be public property? Would not the truth about Margaret ruin her life?"

"I could not see her at all, then?" she asked with a gasp.

"Never see my mother again?" I cried, speaking for the first time, and casting at my grandfather what I know must have been a very black look. "No, no, no!"

"Hush, Peggy!" said my mother.

"Why, Margaret," said my grandfather in a coaxing tone, "wouldn't you like to have a great wax doll with eyes that would open and shut, with clothes to take off and put on?"

"Dolls!" I cried scornfully; "I hate 'em."

"Why, I don't know that I care for them myself," he said in a tone of cajolery that differed very much from the tone he used in speaking to my mother; "but you like horses; now, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Well, then, you shall have a pair of the dearest little ponies to be had, with a little phaeton to ride in. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

My mind had been taken from the point in question by his addressing himself to me, but I began now to see his drift, and I answered half sullenly:

"I don't want anything without mother."

He was evidently nonplussed. I think it had never entered into his mind that a child could not be bought with a pair of ponies and a phaeton. He turned from me to mother.

"She will soon reconcile herself," he said; "and you will not permit her to stand in her own light?"

"She shall decide for herself," my mother answered.

"You know how she will decide if you put it to her," he cried angrily. "You are selfish and unkind."

"It is not for you to make me that reproach," she fired back at him; then grew calm again and said to me: "Peggy, your grandfather wants you to live with him and take his name. Don't speak until you have heard me through. He will be very kind to you, give you a good education, and keep you from want. He thinks it wisest that the world should not know that I am your mother; and you, indeed, know how cruel the world can be to a child born as you were. So you must agree with him that if you come here it is better that I should not be known as your mother."

"I'd rather have you than everything else in the world," I interposed vehemently. "I won't let you go away from me. If you should do it I would follow you. It's no use to talk about it, I won't let you go."

"Of course she would say that when you put it that way," my grandfather exclaimed.

"Put it your own way," my mother answered.

"Come here, Margaret!" said he, holding out his hand.

"I would rather stay by mother," I answered, fearful lest in some way he should gain control of me by getting me close to him.

He looked stern for a moment as if he were not used

to being thwarted in such fashion, but presently said in a coaxing tone such as he used with me at first:

"You are a very little girl to be talked to about these things, but I see no help for it. I want you to understand what is being offered to you. If you remain with your mother she cannot give you a good education, she cannot raise you any higher than she is herself. You will be a drudge, or you may fall and become what—you may end anywhere. Suppose even that your mother were to die; what would become of you? Do you know what becomes of children who have no parents? They are sent to orphan asylums. See how different it will be if you come to me. You will have servants to wait on you, you will have playthings, ponies, nice clothes, everything you can think of. And your mother will be taken care of. She shall not need to work any more, but can have a little home of her own and be lifted quite above all fear of the future. Think of her, Margaret! try to be unselfish!"

I looked from him to mother. Heaven knows that child as I was I cared not a bit for the fine things he offered me; but I knew how hard mother had always worked, and I suspected that the future held worse in store for her.

"Mother," I said in a piteous tone, "will it be better for you?"

"If you are a good woman, an unselfish mother, you will tell her the full truth," my grandfather said sternly.

"Do you think that is my duty?" my mother demanded of him. "If a lie would serve better, would you still say that I must tell the truth?"

"What are you saying?" he cried scornfully; for it was impossible for him to understand my mother; "you know you should speak the truth."

"Peggy," said my mother, looking down at me, her eyes luminous, "I would have you remain with your grandfather if I knew it was best for you; but I do not

"PREPOSTEROUS!" HE EXCLAIMED ANGRILY: "THE ONLY CONDITION ON WHICH I CAN RECEIVE HER IS THAT YOU AND SHE PART FOREVER."

(*See Page 87*)

"YOU WOULDN'T STRIKE A GIRL, WOULD YOU?" I SAID SOFTLY.
(*See Page* 123)

know what is best; you must decide, because I cannot. The truth is this: I would not touch a cent of his money to keep me from starvation. If you remain here I go away as I am, to be lost to you and to him forever."

"Take me with you, mother!" I cried, clinging to her, half fearing I should be torn away from her.

"Wicked woman! cruel mother!" my grandfather cried.

"It is easy to blame me," she answered, with a return of her quiet manner. "I will propose something which has occurred to me. I ask for nothing for myself, and will sacrifice everything for my child. Take her into your house and your heart; let me go into your kitchen. I promise you, I will swear to you, never to betray my relationship to her as long as I live. And she will do the same. You see what she is, as sweet and pure a child as ever lived. Can my influence be bad and bring her to what she is? I must guard over her, even though I give her up."

"Preposterous!" he exclaimed angrily; "the only condition on which I can receive her is that you and she part forever."

My mother rose and took my hand.

"Come, Peggy!" she said, and led me toward the door.

"Stop!" my grandfather cried; "you seem to forget that I have a claim on that child. What if I take her from you and have her placed in an asylum?"

"You could not; you dare not."

She clasped me close to her and stood as if at bay. He evidently thought he had found a way to coerce her, for he smiled and answered:

"I both can and dare. Money will accomplish anything. I can have you arrested as a vagrant, as you were once before; and then the child can be taken from you and put either in an asylum or given to the care of some responsible person."

My mother seemed to swell with wrath and indignation.

"And you dare to say this to me?" she cried. "You, who turned me from your house and who have done nothing for your grandchild all these years? Do you think I would leave her in your hands now? Do I not know what you would make of her if you had her in your power? Better that she should take her chances with me than with you. Take her from me? Do you believe you could keep her from me? No, you can neither buy nor steal her to make of her a hypocrite and a dishonest woman."

She walked out of the house in silent dignity; nor did he attempt to detain her or me by word or act.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ESCAPE

I TOOK it for granted that that was the end of the episode, but mother was evidently not of the same mind, for after she had walked swiftly but yet with a sort of hesitation until she had turned the first corner, she stopped and said:

"I do not know what he will do, Peggy; let us watch."

Her anxiety had made her shrewd, for we had not been a minute sheltered behind a great chestnut tree when my grandfather came out of his house at a rapid pace, his face set in stern, hard lines.

He plainly had no thought of being watched, for he passed our corner without turning his head, and walked rapidly on. We waited for him to get some distance ahead before we ventured to follow him.

"How can he take me from you?" I asked in trepidation.

"I do not know that he can," she answered; "but he told the truth when he said money could do almost anything. We will find out where he goes, and then we shall be able to guess at what he means to do."

I would have said more, my childish nature not holding fear long in the company of my mother, but she was not able to rid herself of the thought that some way might be conceived for separating us; so she asked me to please not ask any more questions.

My grandfather was certainly in no doubt of his course, whatever that might be; for he neither looked to the right nor the left as he strode along, nor once hesitated.

I know my mother had no plan in her own mind, no real guess at what his intentions might be; though it is quite likely that when she saw him stop in front of a big building set back in its own grounds, she had a rather definite suspicion.

My grandfather walked up the path in an uncompromising way toward the building. My mother turned to the first person who came along, who happened to be a ragged little boy, and asked:

"What building is this?"

"The court-house. The jail's underneath."

It was evidently an interesting subject to him, and he showed himself ready to be asked more questions, but my mother, with a little cry, caught me by the hand and almost ran with me in the opposite direction from which we had come.

Even I could see the ominous significance contained in the words, and I allowed myself to be no drag on my mother's movements.

"We will get away before he can catch us," my mother said to me, her face pale and drawn with apprehension.

I do not know to this day what he could have done had he caught us then, but we fled willingly from our own fears.

Mother thought as she walked; perhaps the swiftness of her movements accelerated her thinking. At any rate, she made no more hesitation in her movements than my grandfather had made in his.

She went first to our hotel and procured her bundle, which was much larger than that which she had taken out of the town eleven years before, but which was still not very large.

"I am going," she said to me when we came out of the little hotel, "to find that vessel which they told us was going to New York. Do you remember it—one of the first we saw?

"It was the only one whose captain would take you without sending you to the office first," I answered.

"Yes," she answered; "that is why I am going to him. I did not want to go to New York, but he was going to sail right away, and I want to get away at once. If I don't go the right way tell me."

My mother knew the way well enough, however, and I had nothing to do but keep looking constantly about for my grandfather, who now assumed the proportions to me of an ogre.

I must even confess that there was to me a certain delightful excitement in this escaping from a pursuit; and it reminded me of a story that had been surreptitiously passed about among the boys at school, and the plot of which had been told to me.

It was nothing worse than what was known in those days as a dime novel, but it related to the thrilling adventures of a criminal who was escaping "the bloodhounds of the law." It really meant very little to me, but the boys had been so excited over it that I had been affected; and now it all came back to me.

There was an intensely thrilling moment for us as we crossed the street on which the shipping offices were mostly situated. We both looked quickly up and down it, and then ran swiftly across, for there, not thirty paces from us, were my grandfather and another, a common-looking man, standing in front of one of the offices.

"He thinks we will go there for passage to Boston," my mother said as we slackened our pace after running a full block toward the water front.

"Oh, let us hurry!" I cried, and would have run again; but my mother only turned a corner and went on as before.

"We must not attract attention by running," she said.

We found the bark of which we were in search, and felt much safer when we were in the cabin with the cap-

tain. The bustle on the wharf and in the vessel, too, told us that they were hastening the departure of the bark, but my mother asked the question of the captain:

"When do you sail?"

"Inside of an hour. Oh! you were here a while ago asking after passage."

"Yes, I wanted then to go to Boston first, but I find I shall have to go to New York, so I thought I would come with my things and take passage with you if we could settle on terms."

We discovered afterwards that the captain was a little suspicious of us, wondering what we had to do going to a great city; but he decided that it was none of his business, so he told mother his price for passage—I have forgotten it now, but I know it was very little as compared with what is charged now—and in a few minutes the bargain was made.

We were given a stateroom opening into the little dining room; and it seemed to me that I had never seen so fascinating a place in my life. In my contemplation of it I quite forgot my grandfather until my mother asked me to go on deck with her to watch, so that we might discover if our pursuers came down.

The bark was loaded with lumber, which I learned afterward was being taken in great quantities to New York to be used in the construction of vessels of war. The hold was full, and it was piled as high on the decks as they dared have it; higher, it seemed to me, than it ought to be.

It served mother and me very well then, however, for we found a place where we were out of the way of the busy sailors, and yet whence we could watch the long wharf and see all who came upon it.

It seemed forever to us before the bark could be made ready to cast off from the wharf; and we squeezed each other's hand each time anyone came sauntering down the wharf toward the vessel.

What I suffered during those minutes of waiting was nothing; indeed, I think I was having a certain sort of pleasure in the excitement; but with my poor mother, it was quite different; for to her the result meant more than life or death.

We were to be towed out of the harbor, and I quite forgot my grandfather again in listening to the sailors as they sang around the capstan. It was all so new to me, and so weird.

CHAPTER XV

I DEFEND MY RIGHTS

THE voyage was one of wild delight to me. Mother and I proved to be such good sailors that, after an hour or two of sickness, we never had another qualm; and I was given the range of the entire vessel.

Sailors are proverbially kind to children; and this crew of gaunt giants from the Maine coast simply made a pet of me, and taught me as much as I would learn of sea lore. I learned how to tie all sorts of knots, from a granny to a bowline, and was soon climbing in the rigging with the most agile of them.

The first time I went aloft I gave them all a terrible fright. I had seen the men swarming about, loosing the sails, and had been filled with a desire to get up there and see how it seemed. I chose a time when there was no one aloft, and had contrived to gain the main cross-trees before I was seen.

It was the captain who spied me there, and who sent a man quietly to fetch me down, so that I should not be frightened by being spoken to. I was surprised enough to have the man suddenly appear in the top and catch hold of me as if he believed I would be blown away.

He begged me to come down, and was reinforced by the imperative command of the captain, who roared up most lustily at me the moment he saw I was securely held by the sailor.

I protested that I was safe, but the sailor and the captain insisted, and I think the whole crew assembled on deck to see the little girl brought down from the cross-

trees. I was so humiliated that I was determined to show them that I could climb even if I were a girl; so when the sailor began to back down, with me above him and between his arms, I made a sudden dive and swung around to the under side of the footropes, and came down hand under hand so swiftly as to reach the deck before my sailor.

"You must want to break that little neck of yours," said the captain gruffly. "Don't do that again! Don't you know that's no place for a little girl?"

"I don't care if I am a girl," I answered, "I'll bet I can climb as well as any of them. Look here!"

I jumped up and caught one of the footropes on the under side and went up half a dozen rounds, hand over hand, with such ease as to procure me a murmur of applause.

"Well," said the captain with a short laugh, "if you don't beat all the girls I ever see! I think I'll get you a suit of boy's clothes out of the slop chest."

He said it in jest, but with mother's consent I coaxed him to get me the clothes, so that I might be safer in climbing in the rigging. They fitted me, as the captain said, "altogether too much," until mother's ready needle had done some work on them; but I think I am safe in saying that no other girl ever had such a voyage as I had from the moment I appeared on deck in my boy's clothes, with permission to go where I pleased.

The sailors taught me as much as possible of what they knew, from the parts of the rigging to playing the concertina; and I displayed all my accomplishments, from handsprings to horizontal-bar work.

We had no bad weather, but were slow because of baffling winds; nevertheless the voyage was over all too soon to suit me. The sailors kissed me to a man, and I kissed them in return heartily enough. I suppose I would draw back from such grimy, weather-beaten, stubbly, tobacco-stained faces now, but I loved them then for

their good hearts, and was very glad to hug and kiss them.

As for the captain, he tried hard to get my mother to let him adopt me; and failing in that, offered her his hand in marriage. When that offer was gently, and I think, tearfully rejected, he made her swear to look upon him as a friend for all her life.

He gave me a five-dollar gold piece—for a "luck piece," he said—and the suit of clothes I had worn on board ship.

"It 'll be good for many a day," he said, "jest by letting them tucks out." He referred to the trousers particularly, which, indeed, were of a fit calculated to grow to.

One very good service he did us was to find some cheap rooms in the top floor of a house, which he knew to be respectable. The ship had fastened to a wharf in what was known then as the Dry Dock section of the city; and our rooms were in Fourth Street, near Avenue D.

How useless it would be to try to tell the impression made on mother and me by the great city of New York! The wonder of it soon ceased, however, though the fascination of it never grew less.

Mother settled down to finding work to do, which was not difficult even for a woman in those war days, when there was more than enough work to do for every pair of hands.

I sometimes regretted the freedom of the country, but at least there was no one to twit me with the circumstances of my birth; and at school, which was on Fifth Street, near Avenue D, no one asked any more than my name; and did not remember more than half of that for very long.

I shall not dwell on the next two years, full as they are of interest to me, for they hold nothing that bears particularly upon this story. I grew, not indeed like a weed, but like a carefully cultivated plant.

Another girl, in my situation, might have had a hard time of it. I discovered that there was wood to be had in the shipyards near us, and went after it with a big bag, as I saw the boys and women doing. We were allowed in the yards after a certain hour to pick up the mighty chips made by the adzes and broad axes of the workmen.

The first time I ventured on this errand I was hustled by the ungaliant boys, sworn at as an interloper, and deprived of my chips. All of which did not suit me at all.

For all of half an hour I tried to be patient and forbearing, remembering the lessons of my Tomaso and Mr. Denton. I smiled when I was pushed away from a particularly big chip of oak, I paid no attention when I was jeered and cursed, and only shut my lips tightly together when my chips were stolen.

At last, when these attentions to a stranger seemed to me to take on too much of the character of persecution, I dropped my bag on the earth, planted my fists on my hips, and with my feet well apart said firmly:

"I'm going to punch the head off the next boy that touches me or my chips."

It was not elegant language, I admit, but it was the speech of the boys, and they understood it perfectly, which was what I wished. But I wish you might have heard the jeering laughter that followed my threat; they had seen girls before.

Do I need to say that my threat operated rather like an invitation than anything else? Someone snatched at my bag and it disappeared as if the hand of a magician had touched it; someone else pushed me from behind; still another pulled me by the arm.

I don't know that I have any Scandinavian blood in me, but I do know that something nearly akin to what used to be called the Berserker rage came upon me, and I was filled with the lust of fighting.

Nevertheless, my Tomaso's training in sparring stood me in good stead now, in keeping me sane and cool-headed in spite of my anger. I let them steal my bag and jostle me and jeer at me, while I looked over them for the proper boy to make an example of. And believe me, I never doubted that I should make an example of him.

I found him in a lad fourteen years old, I should say; a typical wharf-rat, with a vicious face, and the air of a bully. Moreover, he had his bag half-full of chips, some of which he had stolen from me.

I jumped at him and caught him as fair a blow between the eyes as you would wish to see; it was certainly more than satisfactory to him; for he uttered a howl of fury and rushed at me, ignoring any sentimental considerations of sex as thoroughly as I wished him to.

It was remarkable how the fighting instinct operated in those boys. There was a ring around us in a moment, although I am sure none of them expected there would be anything more than a preliminary retaliation from the boy, to be instantly followed by my girlish screams of rage and impotency.

That expectation was to be the cause of their present surprise and subsequent respect for me. My antagonist had come so swiftly as to close with me, meaning, I think, to pummel me at close quarters, perhaps to throw me down.

I delivered an upper cut which caught him under the chin and turned him just enough to enable me to strike out from the shoulder and take him on the angle of the jaw.

My Tomaso had told me of seeing that blow struck and its effects, but I had not fully understood its thoroughness until then. My antagonist went down at full length, as completely stunned as if a hammer had been taken to him.

I was as much frightened as any of those who looked on, and if I had not been afraid to run, I am sure I

should have done so; but I never could bear to do a cowardly thing, so I stood where I was, looking as if I were ready for more fighting, until I saw the boy move and struggle to get up, which he did in a few seconds.

Then, with greatly relieved feelings, I leaped over to his bag, which lay not far from him, and appropriated it, saying:

"You've stolen my bag and my chips among you; this will do for me; and if you know when you're well off you'll let me alone."

Whether or not they would have let me alone at once, I do not know; but there came a timely diversion in the shape of a burly watchman with a stout rattan in his hand.

"Here!" he cried, "you let that gal alone, d'you hear? What have they been doin' to you, sis?"

"Been getting acquainted, I guess," I answered calmly; whereupon the boys burst into a roar of laughter, and it was explained to the amazed watchman how I had fought and whipped the boy.

That was the only fight I had in that part of the city; and I often wonder if those ragged little waifs and strays had not in them the hearts of true gentlemen; for when they had overcome the inherited or the instilled conventional notion that a girl was necessarily an inferior creature, they were as friendly and kind as any boys I ever had met.

They swore and smoked and chewed tobacco; they used the filthiest language; they stole whatever they could put their grimy hands on; they lied as a matter of course. And yet they were imbued, not with a sense of wrongdoing, but only with the feeling that as all hands were against them, so their hands must in self-defense be against the world.

But there was a beautiful sense of loyalty to each other fixed in their hearts; and to their own they could be as tender and gentle as the most highly cultured.

I am bound to say that as soon as I had made myself "free of the guild," as the phrase is, even though I never really associated with them, having enough to do in helping mother, I was treated with perfect fairness and with a courtesy that was all the finer that it was not a veneer, but the very heart of the wood.

Perhaps this is not edifying. I don't know, don't much care. I am sure I came to no harm among those semi-outcasts, for all their ignorance of soap and water, brush and comb, books or refinements of any sort; and I do thank God now that He let me know so much of that phase of life.

At the time, however, I was concerned chiefly to get mother her supply of good wood, knowing how much it meant to her, for everything was beginning to go up in price in a way that was startling. I say everything, but in fact, as is always the case, wages were the last to go up; so that for a long time it seemed as if wage-earners must starve.

Then money became so scarce that we were using postage stamps for currency; and grocers and other storekeepers were getting out copper coins of their own, which might be taken in their neighborhood, but would not be accepted anywhere else.

Butter went up to a dollar a pound, and other things in proportion. No wonder mother was glad of the bag of oak chips I brought in to her at night.

As I look back it seems to me that life at that time was nothing less than a mad whirl; as if it were the most unreal period that ever was. Women wore such huge hoopskirts of steel wire that they could not enter ordinary doorways without either tilting their skirts sidewise or bending over and squeezing them together.

The streets were full of soldiers, either going to the front in gay, bright uniforms, and with heads erect; or returning in tatters, limping, ghastly, bandaged, and ill.

The boys mostly dressed in imitation of the soldiers;

and all their play was mock war. We sang nothing but wildly patriotic songs in the schools; and whistled either war-songs or sentimental ones about the absent soldier.

We children even got the real war fever; and some of the boys no bigger than I enlisted as drummers, or on board of the men-of-war. The boy I had had the fight with went with a zouave regiment as drummer boy and was killed. His name was mentioned in the papers for bravery, however; and I know I cried and wished I had not knocked him down.

If I had been a boy I suppose I should have wanted to enlist as the other boys did; but aside from the fact that I could not desert mother, I never did really like blood. Maybe that was because we ate no meat.

Well, the two years went by. I was a good scholar, and mother was laying by a little money. I knew now that it was her intention that I should get all the schooling possible, which was not much for a girl in those days, so that I might be a teacher.

Her hopes for me rose no higher than that because all the avenues of employment were closed to women in those days. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were fighting hard, even then, for the advancement of their sex, and were meeting with the reward of the reformer. They were misunderstood, vilified, denounced. And their own sex led in the onslaught.

Mother was deeply interested in their work, and followed it greedily because she saw in it the dawn of better days for women. I often think of that. Mother scrubbed floors, washed, and ironed, did any kind of work that was honest, and yet thought. I wonder, indeed, if it is not most often the worker who is the thinker, who is the most ready for the reform.

Alas! those two years! I dread the going beyond them, and yet it must be done.

CHAPTER XVI

ALL ALONE

SURELY never did mother and child have more beautiful talks together than did my mother and I. I did not understand all she said to me, for I realize now that during the years that she had been set apart from the conventional world, she had been thinking untrammeled. Perhaps if she had been spared to do so she would have found her place at last on the rostrum by the side of the noble women who have pleaded liberty's cause; but I was her only auditor; and I hope her sweet, strong words have not been wasted.

Perhaps I shall say enough if I say that her constant refrain, the ever potent motive of her words was: Make yourself and keep yourself independent of any man; but remember always that your highest function and your noblest, sweetest life shall be in motherhood.

And that from a woman who had suffered what she had through motherhood! But she had worked all that out and could say to me:

"My fault was not motherhood, which all men honor; it was non-conformity. Ignorantly and innocently I transgressed a rule of society, and society would not forgive me. I do not blame society, but I do not blame myself. I would rather have had my child of love and suffered the opprobrium of society, than have lived a life of respectable harlotry as an unloved, unloving wife."

Talks such as this, and others simpler and more pertinent to my age, kept me from taking any harm from

the coarse, unbridled speech of the boys with whom I was thrown; though, if I speak the full truth, there was far less harm in the blasphemy and vulgarity of the boys in the shipyards, than in the secret, whispered conversation of the misinformed girls in school.

But all this is as nothing, excepting as it may show how close my mother and I had come to be.

The summer vacation had come, and I was twelve years old. I had been helping mother with her ironing; doing most of it in fact, because she had shown signs of being unfit.

She had never been ill, and we did not know what to make of her inability to stand over the hot irons. The summer was a hot one, and we finally laid it to that fact; so I undertook the work under her directions, as she lay on her bed in the next room, sometimes burning with heat, sometimes shivering even though burning.

Then she refused to eat anything and would fall into the heaviest but most unrestful, dream-haunted sleep.

I don't know who suggested a doctor; whether it was a neighbor, or one of us; but the doctor came and said, "Typhoid fever."

How had she gotten the terrible fever? What did it matter to me or to her how she had contracted it? There it was in her system, burning like a fierce fire—consuming her.

And there was no one to save her from the doctor. He gave her and insisted on giving her a liquid preparation of quinine, which she over and over again was unable to retain in her stomach.

She wailed for water, in her delirium talking about a spring on her father's farm, and begging to be taken there. But the doctor said she must have no water, as it was dangerous in her condition. Occasionally, tiny bits of ice were given her, and her greed for them was awful to see.

That was nearly forty years ago, and perhaps doc-

tors allow their fever patients to have water now; perhaps they admit they were mistaken forty years ago in that respect. Do they ever admit the possibility of error now?

Ah me! why do doctors, why do any of us, refuse to admit the possibility of error in any of our cherished beliefs? Why are our beliefs so cherished? Is there any better reason than that we have been taught so? Why will we be so afraid to consider whether or not a belief has any better foundation than because?

Well, it was forty years ago, and it is not for me to be bitter toward that doctor whose ignorance was the intrenched wisdom of the day. My mother succumbed to disease and, I must think, ignorance.

It was enough for me, numbed by my grief, that she had gone and left me behind. I followed her to the grave, weeping; but hardly conscious whether I cried or laughed. The world seemed topsy-turvy.

Then I was home again, but alone! all alone! Have you ever been alone? Do you know what it is to be in the midst of life and no part of it? I was left alone in the crushing silence of the rooms that had been ours; and child though I was I think I must know what the awful insolation of the maniac is.

CHAPTER XVII

FOOT-LOOSE

THE rent of the rooms had been paid in advance for the remainder of the month, so that there was no reason why I should not remain in them. Mother had laid up sufficient money to pay for a decent funeral; and there may have been a few dollars left.

I thought neither of the present nor the future, but lived on as they permitted me to. The neighbors wished me to eat with them, and when I refused they kindly sent food to me.

It never occurred to me that they might be giving their thoughts to me any further than that; but it was impossible that they should not. What was a lonely girl, and an uncommonly beautiful one of twelve years of age to do in that great city?

The first intimation I had that I was not my own mistress was from an overheard conversation between two of my kind neighbors. They were in one of our rooms, and I brooding in the other. I suppose I had been so dull and inattentive for the few days succeeding the funeral that they gave little thought to me in their talk.

"When will he be here?" I heard one say.

"Some time this evening. I'm sure if I could take the child I would. She is a good girl and knows how to help; but I've all I can do now."

"Such a pretty child, too," said the first speaker. "I wouldn't like to have the responsibility of her. What if she should go wrong! No, it's much better she should go to a home."

"She wouldn't like it at first, she's been so free to come and to go, but it will be for her good."

"Where is the asylum?"

"I don't exactly know where. Up in Morrisania, I think."

I was listening now with all my ears. There was no doubt it was of me they were talking. Send me to an asylum? I was wrenched out of my stupor in an instant. I would not go there.

"What will become of the things here?" one of them asked.

"Oh, they'll sell them and put the money to Maggie's credit, I believe."

A little later they came in to see me and to say a few kind words to me. I shall be ever grateful to them for what they did for me, but then I was only wishing they would go away.

I had made up my mind to get away from the house and escape the terrible fate that threatened me, but just how to do it I did not know; and I wanted to be alone to think it out.

They did not remain long, but soon went back to the floors they lived on, being satisfied that I was in no need of anything.

I ran to lock the door so that I might feel free from intrusion, and then went to the window and stood there, pressing my forehead against the glass. I think I never, to this day, see a child doing that very common thing, but I recall those wretched hours of mine.

It did not take me long to decide once my mind began to work on the problem. I was not timid as girls usually are, but was even more self-reliant than most boys of my age; that having been one of the objects kept in view in all my education.

There is no need to say how I worked it all out, but having settled on my plan I began at once to put it in operation.

I got together what money I had of my own and a little I could find of mother's, together with a few valueless trinkets, which I had never known her to wear, but which were associated with her. These things and a few pieces of clothing—handkerchiefs and stockings, of which I made a package—I put aside.

Then I got out the suit of clothes which Captain Hawes of the bark which had brought us from Maine had given me. I had tried it on in fun more than once since then, and it fitted me far better than it had when I wore it on the voyage; though I am sure no one would have thought of imagining that it had been made to measure.

I now undressed and stood up in front of the mirror. I was as pretty as reasonably good features and abounding health could make me, but I had no thought of that as I studied myself. I was thinking of my golden curls of which mother had taken such care, and which injudicious strangers had more than once complimented me on.

But I was not thinking of their beauty, but of how best to be rid of them. I felt that I was sure to make a bad piece of work in cutting them off, but on the other hand I did not dare to go to a barber with them to be cut.

I caught up mother's shears, and off came the curls one after another, until I stood shorn in as ragged a fashion as ever creature was. I think if this had been my mother's act, I should have cried out for joy at the removal of this mark of my sex; as it was I only looked curiously at myself and realized that with the departure of my curls went the probability of recognition.

I now made shift to part my hair on the side, boy fashion; and then hastily donned my clothes. The transformation was complete; and I am free to say that I made a very good imitation of a boy. This would not have been so easy if I had begun to develop into

womanhood, which fortunately for me was not the case.

With my money in my pocket, and my bundle in my hand, I made the rounds of our little rooms, sobbing a farewell to the things made dear by association with mother, and then softly opened the door and plunged out.

It was the first time I had been out since the funeral, and it was not easy to go; but it was easier far in my disguise than it would have been had I tried it before my transformation.

I crept down the stairs very softly so that no one would hear me and come out to discover why I went down. I reached the street without recognition even from the children playing there, which I took to be conclusive of the completeness of my disguise.

Indeed I may say that I was not discovered or recognized, and that I have never since seen one of those good people who were kind to me then. And yet I returned to the neighborhood some years after and tried to find them in order to thank them for the kindness which I understood better as I grew older. But New York is never the same from one decade to another, and when I returned to Fourth Street the only thing that was familiar was the little grocery on the corner; and even that was kept by someone else.

I was not looking far into the future that afternoon, however, but was only anxious to get safe away from those who would put me in an asylum; and I did not breathe freely until I was across Avenue B. Then, indeed, I felt that I might say that I had effected my escape.

But if I had escaped from an asylum I had done so at the usual risk to the free rover—I must make good my right to rove by holding my own with the world at large.

My first trouble came on the block between Avenues A and B. There I was waylaid by a gang of little ruffians, and was in such low spirits that I had not the

heart to fight, nor the wit to run, until it was too late. I escaped without my bundle and minus my cap.

Certainly my cares were that much reduced, but I was neither thankful for that nor yet very resentful that they had been reduced without my consent. I think I was more alert after that, however, and gave more thought to what I must do to maintain myself.

But first, because there were a number of uncomplimentary remarks made on the cut of my hair, I went to a barber's on the Bowery and had my hair cut short. I think the barber spoke of it as a fighting crop; and I had reason later to be glad I had chosen that style of haircut.

It cost me fifteen cents to get rid of my hair, but when I looked in the mirror in front of me I felt that the money was well invested, since I was no longer merely disguised, but absolutely changed. I do not believe my own dear mother would have known me if she could have seen me.

Well, I was foot-loose and totally unencumbered now, and I set out to put into operation the plan I had finally decided on, which was nothing less than to sell newspapers for a living. Beyond living in the present I did not go.

Whatever possessed me to go down to the City Hall looking as I did, I am sure I cannot say. I would have known better than invite disaster if I had not been so full of my sorrow. I actually never thought of smearing my face with dirt, but made my way down the Bowery in all the splendor of perfect cleanliness.

I had the whitest of skins, the rosiest of cheeks, the reddest of lips. My fighting crop could not prevent me from being a pretty boy; and what business has a pretty boy with a bundle of papers under his arm? That is the very thing I was to find out.

Those were days when good and evil news was hourly coming in from the battlefields, and when everybody was buying papers—morning papers, extras, and even-

ing papers. There were few newsstands, and many newsboys.

I reached Newspaper Row at about four o'clock in the afternoon, and I felt myself particularly fortunate in getting there just as the papers were being distributed to the boys. I think this was going on in Ann Street, but I am not sure.

Anyhow, I watched how the boys thrust out a piece of money—what they called shin-plasters in those days—and received a number of papers in return from the man who had the big pile of papers to distribute. I handed out a quarter of a dollar and received my bundle.

It was at about that time that those dirty-faced, grimy little wretches became aware that a boy from the other world was in their midst. One of them yelled in his shrillest tones:

"Hey, Jimmy! here's a stiff!"

The next thing I was sensibly aware of I was being backed against a house wall at bay, my papers scattered on the sidewalk, a wall of wicked faces opposed to me.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WATER FRONT

IF ever righteous indignation possessed a child, it did me at the moment I faced the crowd of newsboys who had assaulted me. I had been doing no wrong, and they had struck and robbed me. My heart swelled within me, and I summoned all my strength and all my skill in fight.

If this were an imaginative sketch I should certainly make little Peggy Grant assail that crowd of naughty boys, and after doing deeds of bravery, come off victorious; thus rewarding good and punishing evil, and at the same time showing once again how much better a girl is than a boy, or any number of them.

But the truth is different. I did indeed strike out with good effect, and no doubt astonished those naughty boys, but they were not there either to enjoy a good fight or to waste unnecessary time; their business was to discourage an interloper; and they did it thoroughly.

From a clean-faced, bright-eyed, beautiful boy in a neat, if not elegant, suit of clothes, I was speedily transformed into a ragged, dirty little wretch with unnatural swellings about my eyes. My papers were but shreds. And the performance of this change occupied not more than five minutes; at the end of which time my enemies were scattered over Park Row and the City Hall Park cheerily selling their papers.

Several elderly and well-intentioned passers-by offered me sympathy and advice, but I had no stomach for either. I made my way out of the crowded and dirty street, filled

with indignation and wrath, debating fiercely with myself whether to devote the rest of my life to showing I could sell papers if I wished to, or to accept as final the forcible intimation that my presence, in the capacity of newsboy, was not wanted in that part of the city.

For the present, at least, I decided to seek a more secluded spot where I might take some stock of my wounds; and the waterside suggested itself to me at once, partly because I felt more at home along the wharves, and partly because a crimson stain on my hand told me that my nose had responded to the bracing treatment it had received, and would be the better for hydropathic application.

I am not very clear as to how I reached the water front, but I think I went down Fulton Street and that I was stared at, laughed at, and thrust this way and that by the streams of hurrying men and women. It seemed to me that all New York must be hurrying to a fire.

I know that I went through old Fulton Market and saw such an array of tempting things to eat that a wolf woke up within me and made me feel that I must have my supper soon. I suppose that I had starved myself during the days of my grief, and now, being shaken out of my stupor by my exciting experience with the newsboys, was come to my normal self.

At any rate, I resolved that when I had washed my face I would return and invest some of my money in food—the fruit and peanuts tempted me more than anything else.

With this end in view I turned away from Fulton Ferry and went down the street along the wharves, looking for a place where I could get near the water. This was soon found, and in a little while I had removed the blood and mud from my face, although I had not sufficient faith in the water of the East River to feel that my face was then clean.

By this time the swelling about my eyes had nearly

closed them both, and my head was aching; but my appetite remained unaffected. I returned to the market and bought me some cherries and peanuts from the stands on the sidewalk, ignoring the facetious remarks of the salesmen on the condition of my face. I wanted to tell them that they had a better opinion of their own wit than I had, but I held my tongue in spite of the temptation.

I knew better than to go down to the wharves and eat my supper in sight of the boys who prowled about there; so I walked about, eating my cherries, the delicious taste of which I seem to recall at this moment, making the market my promenade, and finally buying a quarter of a pound of cheese and some big crackers. The larger part of the cheese and more than half of the crackers I stowed away in one of my pockets, for my breakfast, together with some of the peanuts.

I am afraid I forgot my Tomaso's repeated instructions always to finish a meal with some hunger left, but I enjoyed my meal intensely; and I believe I never see a bit of cheese or smell peanuts but I think of Fulton Market and the afternoon I worked my way through its crowded aisles, munching my simple meal and devouring with my eyes the wonderful array of things to eat displayed there.

I did want a drink of water woefully after eating so much dry food, but if I had disobeyed my Tomaso in eating too much, I could not go so far as to disregard his instructions as to drinking: Never water a horse after grain, and never water a man after any kind of food.

I could have enjoyed walking about the market for a long time, watching the increasing throngs of people, if it had not been for my aching head. Perhaps my head would not have ached so much if I had taken the advice and proffered aid of a butcher, whose sympathies I evidently excited by my swollen eyes. He offered me a slice of raw meat to put on my bruises, but the thought

of meat was so unpleasant to me that I turned away in disgust.

I don't know to this day that the meat would have effected anything as an outward application, but the kindly offer at that time resulted in driving me out of the market to seek the cooler, fresher air on one of the wharves.

I had no heart for making another struggle to sell papers that evening, but was content to wait until the consequences of my first attempt had passed away; so I wandered along the water front looking for a wharf that tempted me out upon it.

And presently I came upon it. It was the very wharf of wharves for me. At its end I saw a throng of boys diving into the river. Swimming! if only I could strip and plunge into the water out there where it was clean! I knew I should be better at once; that my headache would go. But I was a girl, and mustn't.

I was dressed like a boy, however, and no one would bother his head about whether I looked on or not. I almost forgot my head and eyes in the delight of going down the wharf to watch the boys.

And what fun it was! I found a seat on a pile of cotton bales, where no one paid any attention to me, and where the fresh breeze from the water could fan my hot face; and there I sat, unconscious at last of my wounds.

Have you ever seen a party of boys in swimming? If you never have, make the opportunity; and choose a party of wharf-rats in New York. I sat absorbed and envious.

They had rigged up a spring-board by running a long plank out over the water, the wharf end being held in place by a rod of iron that acted as a stay of some sort. Over this the boys swarmed one after another, as swiftly as they could follow, yelling and screaming with glee, and then diving in every direction into the water, which went up in foam of splashes.

And as they ran along the plank others would constantly climb up the end of the wharf, glistening with the water drops, brushing their hair from their faces and getting into line for another dive.

Ah, but they were beautiful to look at. My Tomaso had taught me enough of the beauty of the human figure to enable me to enjoy the sight of those boys to the full.

They swore and used foul language constantly, but I knew it was the only way they knew how to talk, for I had met their like before in the shipyards; so I never gave myself any concern about what they said, but busied myself with what they did and how they looked.

When I saw them begin to dress themselves, I knew that it was time for me to slip away; for when your wharf-rat has passed a sufficient time in innocent amusement he longs for the excitement of mischief; and a stranger boy to bait is a temptation he cannot resist.

But I remembered the wharf and its bales of cotton, so that I might return later to sleep there, and wandered along the wharves toward the Battery, looking at the vessels tied up there, and longing to go aboard of some of them.

There was one bark there—I think her name was the *Benefactress*—which drew me like a magnet. The wharf at which she lay seemed so much cleaner and roomier than most of the others that it was only natural that the vessel, too, should be particularly trim and neat.

I was willing to admit that she was even more beautiful than the beloved bark that had brought us down from Maine. How her brass shone! How clean her woodwork was! How trimly the sails were furled and the gaskets tied!

The watchman, after eyeing me suspiciously, was propitiated by my admiration for the bark, and told me she was bound for Shanghai, China. I begged to be allowed to go aboard of her, but was refused; so contented myself with walking up and down on the wharf, admiring

her lines where I could see them from the wharf, and dreaming.

How much of the action of life is born in day-dreams? I thought of myself lone and lorn in that great city, and I thought of that graceful thing cutting the blue water of the great ocean, carrying men and goods to that far-off land where the world was all different from ours.

Why could I not go on her? I was a boy so far as anyone knew; I could do a boy's work as well as another; I knew a bark from end to end, alow and aloft.

"Do they want a boy on board of her, sir?" I said to the watchman, my heart up in my throat. I doubt if I should have had the courage to ask if I had given myself time to think.

"Here comes the captain; ask him."

Down the wharf came a great, burly man with a tawny beard and keen blue eyes. On his arm was a sweet little lady, who evidently felt that she was the most honored of women to have the right to cling to that brawny arm as she was doing.

"Hello!" he said gruffly, as I stepped timidly in front of him; "what do you want?"

"The poor little fellow!" said the lady softly; "see how he has been bruised, Charley!"

"If you please," I stammered, turning from her mild eyes to his sharp ones, "do you want a boy on board?"

"I think you've run away from home, my boy," he answered curtly; "you'd better go back there if you have. No, we don't want any boys on the *Benefactress*."

"Have you run away from home, little boy?" the lady asked gently.

"No, ma'am, I haven't," I answered, a sudden catch in my throat as I thought of mother; "I haven't any home. And I know all about a bark; indeed I do. I wish you'd try me, captain."

It seemed to me that to go on the *Benefactress* with

that sweet lady in the cabin would be the very acme of felicity; and that she was going to be in the cabin I knew by his laughing words to her as he pushed me aside with a decided shake of his head.

"Come away! I can see you'd ship the little scamp in a minute because you think you'll be lonely on such a long voyage with nobody but me to talk to."

"Oh, Charley!"

"Won't you please take me?" I cried, running after them, my heart so set on going that it seemed as if I had lived up to that time for no other purpose. "I have no home, and I'm going to sea; indeed I am. Won't you take me?"

"No," said the captain in a tone that left no doubt of his meaning. "But I'll tell you what," he added as he noted my bitter disappointment; "there's a bark over at that wharf there"—pointing—"that's going to China, too; and you may get a berth on her. I can't take you, for I haven't an inch of room."

I have told of this conversation, not because it was something that took place that evening, but because it left me with my mind made up firmly to one thing: I would go to sea. I felt that it was the very thing of things that I would most like to do; and at once I recalled how Captain Hawes of the bark we had come to the city on had always held me spellbound by his stories of the sea.

So I turned my back on the lovely *Benefactress*, and reluctantly, it may be, but firmly, too, I made my way to the next wharf, where the bark lay to which the captain had pointed.

It had been coming dusk all the while, and by this time was near enough to night to make it less easy to get a good look at the vessel; but I made out her name on the stern: *Abigail* of Bath. It gave me a comfortable feeling to know that she hailed from Maine, and I examined her as I walked along her side, with an added interest.

She was not so trim and immaculate as the *Benefac-*

tress, but she looked stanch and well-found; and from the appearance of things it was plain she was almost ready for sailing. Indeed, when the watchman came up to drive me away, being suspicious of thieves, I asked him when she would sail, and he told me everything would be on board that night, so that she could sail the first thing in the morning.

"Do they want any hands?" I asked, bolder now than I had been; for I am sure that at that time I was thoroughly convinced that it was my fate to go to sea.

"The crew 'll be aboard to-night," he answered, looking at me in amusement, as a man might who had seen scores of runaway boys trying to go to sea, "and I don't know whether the old man's got all the hands he wants or not; but I can tell you one thing for dead sure, sonny; if you ask him to ship you, he will give you a rope's end for your answer."

When I heard this and looked in the man's face I felt that it was altogether useless for me to make application. It was plain a boy was an object of suspicion along the water front.

"Thank you," I said, "I did want to go to sea, but if you think the captain wouldn't take me, why I'll not say anything about it."

"That's right," he laughed. "And now take some more advice and go home to your mother. Why, the worst thing that could happen to you would be to get a berth on that there bark. The captain is a Tartar to begin with, and would just about half kill you before the voyage was over; and then think how seasick and homesick you'd be. Go on home, now, like a good boy! You've been fightin' and are afraid to go home, I s'pose; but you take my advice and go home and take your lickin' like a little man from those who love you, instead o' wantin' to go where you'll have the life knocked out o' you by somebody that don't care whether you're alive or dead. Go on, now!"

It was kindly said and kindly meant; and if I had had a home to go to I am sure his words would have had some effect upon me. As it was I just waited until his back was turned, and then slipped in among some boxes and bales and hid myself.

CHAPTER XIX

A STOWAWAY

TO one who has never heard the peculiar noises made on a sailing vessel as she casts loose from her wharf and is towed out into the harbor, no description can have any real value; but to one who has heard them they all have character and meaning; from the sudden rush of sailor feet together over the deck to the creaking strain of a taut hawser.

But to fully appreciate these various sounds and to fill them full of meaning I think they should be heard from a hiding place between two bales of cotton sheetings, just under the main deck near the forward hatchway.

I can say this, for that was where I was stretched out on the *Abigail* as she cast loose from the wharf that fair summer morning. The hatchway was open, so that the air was fresh enough, though heavy with those mingled good and foul odors that haunt a laden vessel; and I ate a portion of my crackers and cheese with a good appetite.

I had slept on the wharf until after midnight, when I was awakened by the songs roared out by the drunken crew as it came down from the sailor boarding house, from which the men had been shipped according to the custom of those days, when a sailor often took a glass of liquor with his hardly earned wages in his pocket just ashore from a long voyage, and waked up the next morning to find himself not only penniless but out on the ocean shipped for a long voyage.

I had known of the customs of the boarding-house

keepers and knew I might trust to being awakened by the sailors when they came down. I started up and joined the men, unnoticed by the boarding-house runner who was with them. I crept over the side, huddled close to one of the sailors, and made my way, during the confusion of the moment, to the fore hatchway, down which I went.

My only fear was being found too soon. I expected to be well beaten when discovered, for the best of sailors are none too gentle with a stowaway; but I was sure that when it was learned how strong, willing, and able I was they would all be good to me. Anyhow, I was glad to be gliding down the river, and hoped with all my heart that the pilot would be gone before I was discovered.

I had heard so much sailor talk on my first voyage that I guessed how it would be on the *Abigail;* the new sailors would be heavy with the liquor, some of it drugged, no doubt, and would be ugly and sullen at first, so as to work slowly and unwillingly, which would put off the work of trimming the bark.

And indeed I could hear hoarse voices of command swearing furiously at the angry men who woke to find themselves tricked into another voyage; and finally, I heard the orders given which I knew meant that the pilot was leaving.

The tugboat had dropped us long since, and we had been under sail for several hours already when the pilot went over the side. That meant that we were out at sea, and that the men would not be long in coming to terms with the captain if he were anything of a man.

I waited until I was sure the pilot would be too far away to be brought back for the sake of a wretched little stowaway, and then crept cautiously out of my hiding place and approached the hatchway. The crucial moment was now so near that in spite of my longing for the voyage I had a desperate heart sinking. What kind of a man was the captain?

I had my answer to that unspoken question in the sudden dropping of two sailors on the deck near the hatchway, followed by a volley of terrible oaths and the assurance to all in general that there was a very warm place in the world to come, which, in the opinion of the speaker, who was the captain, would be vastly more comfortable than that bark for all swabs and loafers.

Then, on the other side of the open hatch came another but less fearful volley, followed by the body of a sailor tumbling half-way over the coaming. It was the first mate who had thus warned the sailor of what to expect! And I fancy the lesson was a partial failure because of the fact that the eyes of the sailor as his head hung over the coaming rested full on me.

"My God!" I heard him cry as he dragged himself back and pointed down into the hold, "what's that?"

I learned afterward that in his condition my face, with its pair of discolored eyes, seen through the dim light where I stood, suggested something satanic. To the mate, who peered over the hatchway, there stood nothing more important or suggestive than a stowaway, for whom every good sailor has a supreme contempt.

Well, I was hauled out with violent objurgations, held securely by one arm and thoroughly rope's-ended by the first mate, who proved himself an expert. I was sore enough when he passed me over to the captain, toward whom I had made most frantic efforts to run all the while that the rope was playing about my body and legs.

Ah, but I was sore and bruised! A half-dazed crew and crowding work made ugly-tempered officers; and I had only served as a sort of outlet for the mate. The captain seemed inclined to take his turn at me with an even better will, and certainly with a stronger arm, for he was a Hercules in build and muscle.

"Blankety blank blank you!" he roared at me, as he gripped my arm, "I've a mind to chuck you over the

side. What are you doing here, you whelp?" And he raised his hand to smite me.

As I do not believe he knew how strong he was I was certain that if ever that mighty hand struck me I would be unconscious; and yet I was happier, for all my rope's-ending, than I had been in many days.

"You wouldn't strike a girl, would you?" I said softly.

"A girl!" said he, and let me go, though he still eyed me with suspicion.

"Yes, I'm a girl, captain," I answered. "I wanted to see China, and I couldn't pay my passage, so I just came aboard and stowed away. You'll let me go with you, won't you?"

He eyed me for a few moments longer without speaking; then pointed to the after deck and said sternly:

"You go back there and wait for me."

I know I walked very jauntily. I tried to, anyway, and I whistled "Black-Eyed Susan"; thereby exciting the wonder of the bo'sen, who stood at the wheel and who had been a witness of the mate's efforts in my behalf.

"If you whistle for the mate, you'll dance for the captain," he said grimly.

"I'll dance for you if you like," I answered saucily. "I like this bark, and I'm mighty glad to be on her;" and thereupon I took a few steps of a hornpipe.

"The Lord save you!" he said anxiously; "if the old man were to see you do that now when he's so mad, he'd be like to throw you overboard. The least he'd do would be to trice you up by the thumbs. Take my advice and don't aggravate him."

"I'm not afraid of him," I said coolly, going up to his side and looking at the binnacle. "It's too late to put me ashore now."

I am sure my calm impudence staggered the weather-beaten old sailor. He stared at me and shook his head,

stared again and shifted his quid as if at a loss for any expression to fit my case.

Then I went to the rail and leaned over it, looking at the water as it glided by. The wind was on the quarter and we were slipping along in a style to please even a landsman. But I was too insanely happy to stand long looking at the water. I turned and saw the captain coming toward me, a very hard, grim expression on his rough face.

I immediately planted my feet wide apart, looking knowingly aloft at sky and rigging, and cried out before he could say a word:

"You'd better shake a couple of reefs out of that mainsail, captain, if you want to get out into good blue water before eight bells. If you're afraid to send those drunken swabs up aloft I'll do the trick for you myself. What do you say; shall I?"

The captain said nothing, but only stared at me earnestly, very much to the amazement of the man at the wheel, as I could see by taking a sly look at him.

"You look a little down in the mouth, captain," I went on. "I think you'd be the better for a little music. How do you like this?" And I whistled him a tune I had learned of Captain Hawes.

"You say you're a girl," he said, taking hold of my arm, but very gently, and looking me over very carefully. "You don't look it, but you may be. What's your name?"

"What d'you think it is?"

"Where did you get those clothes?"

"Where d'you think?"

"Where did you learn that tune?"

"Where d'you think?"

"My God! it can't be," he murmured in a low tone; then aloud: "How did you come by those black eyes? If you are the girl I think you wouldn't have them for nothing."

"Never mind about my eyes; they'll be gray when the black goes out."

He had a sudden thought and caught my hand and looked at it back and palm. After studying it he cried:

"Tell me your name, or I swear I'll take you into the cabin and strip you to find out whether you're girl or boy."

Then, of a sudden, the fun all went out of me, and I threw myself into the captain's arms, sobbing:

"Mother called me Peggy, but she'll never do it again."

Well, do I need to say it was Captain Hawes my good fortune had thrown me with? Captain Hawes, who had that very day been to see us at our rooms, only to learn there of what had happened.

What a wonderful turn of the wheel of fortune it was! From a stowaway for whom no stripes could be severe enough, I was at once promoted to the best stateroom in the cabin next to the captain's; and as for the poor first mate, when he heard my story from the captain, he had no words good enough to apologize with. However, I assured him that I had not minded his rope's end a least little bit from the moment my eyes had fallen on Captain Hawes.

I have been often told that a long sea voyage is monotonous; I can say that this one was not. There was always something for me to do. I played in the rigging like a monkey, learned no end of sailor lore, sang songs in the moonlight, wrung dreadful music out of a concertina, read lots of good books, which the captain had stowed away in his lockers, played checkers and dominoes. In fact, because the captain was pleased to be my slave I was the pet of the *Abigail*, and ruled her if I did not command her.

The sailmaker made me a suit of clothes of some thin stuff to wear in the tropics; and if they were not of a

stylish cut, at least they were comfortable, being cut off above the knees as to breeches and short-sleeved and V-shaped throat as to shirt. And I am very sure that if people would only consult comfort instead of fashion in the cut of their garments, there would be infinitely more comfort in the world.

The captain had suggested making me a skirt, and the sailmaker had said he could do it as well as shirt and breeches; but I had declared I would throw overboard any such absurd and useless thing as a skirt; so it was never made, and I went about in bare legs, bare feet, and bare head.

My eyes soon came back to their normal color, but it seemed to me that my hair would never grow, as I wished it to now that there was no need of having it fit for fighting. As a matter of fact, it did grow rapidly, but the first growth is always least apparent.

We were not without an undercurrent of excitement either; for in those days the Confederacy had its privateers searching the seas for Union ships, and we never knew when there might loom on the horizon one of those ugly steamers which had already chased most of Uncle Sam's mercantile marine off the ocean.

We met with no unpleasantness of this sort, however, but sailed on our way with good winds most of the time, with an occasional storm and one calm of a whole week, when the bark lay as if on a sheet of glass, fairly roasting under a tropical sun.

We rounded the Cape of Good Hope without any trouble, and started on the long northward journey. We were bound for Newchwang, in the northern part of China, a port which had only recently been opened to commerce, and to which Captain Hawes had never been. Indeed, he had made but two trips to China before, both since leaving his old bark, and each time had gone to Shanghai.

He had a great deal to tell me of China, and you may

be sure I listened to it all with greedy ears; though I liked best the little he had to say of the lesser known land of Japan, which had been opened to foreigners but a short time then, and which was even more a land of wonders than China, according to all that was known of it.

It was in October when at last we sailed into the muddy waters sent out far into the ocean by the Yang-tse River. The captain hailed the sign as a traveler on land might a sign-post at a cross-road. He knew just where he was then.

I noticed that he watched the barometer anxiously, and found that it was because he dreaded encountering a typhoon in the choppy waters of the Yellow Sea, which, though wide enough in ordinary weather, was a bad place to be in a cyclone.

But who can avoid his fate? as the Orientals say. We fairly ran into a typhoon on the very verge of the Yellow Sea. It was a thing to be remembered. The barometer dropped and dropped with frightful rapidity, and the sky began to close down on us for all the world like a pall, seeming as if it were dense and heavy enough to crush us when at last it should reach us. And the gulls began to cross and recross our bows, screaming fearfully. And yet the storm did not come.

For hours the signs were all present, and the captain had everything made tight and fast, leaving only just as much sail as he felt he must carry; but it was not until the afternoon that the demon of wind caught us. We were under bare poles, and I recall distinctly that when I last looked at the binnacle we were headed due northeast. The captain was seeking safety.

At first I, in my ignorance, was exhilarated by the rage of the elements, whereby our little bark of six hundred tons was tossed about literally like a chip. We ate as we could and of what we could. Nothing was cooked, for the galley was useless, the waves sweeping

fore and aft over the deck. Such other storms as I had seen were child's play to this.

I grew serious after a while, partly from a sense of the awfulness of the storm, but more from watching the stern, troubled face of the captain. How we got through that night I do not know, nor how anybody slept, if anybody besides me did; for when I looked through the windows of the cabin along the deck, I saw it was a mass of wreckage. In fact, the topmasts had come down during the night, and we were all but swamped.

The bark rolled heavily, and with fearful groans, yet making headway, too, for the force of the wind seemed enough to lift her bodily out of the water to carry her on. This went on all that day. I was not allowed on deck at all. Two men had been swept overboard, and the men at the wheel were lashed at their places.

CHAPTER XX

SHIPWRECK

FOR three days and three nights that devoted little bark was tossed about, the sport of the wind and waves, quite beyond guidance or control. By day there was an impenetrable gray pall upon the water, and by night a black one. If the wind changed it was to grow fiercer. We were utterly dismantled; and why we were not swallowed up in the hungry waters I cannot tell.

The men were wild-eyed and haggard with fatigue, sleeplessness and fear. Not one of them but was prepared for the worst. They slept when they could, but started up at a word. There was not a coward among them. I almost weep now when I think of those brave men.

The general opinion was that we had been driven between Corea and Japan, and were now somewhere off the west coast of the latter country. Why they should think so I had no notion; nor could I get a good reason from the captain or mate. It was just a sailor's reason; something like a woman's intuition, perhaps. At any rate, it was proved correct in the end.

There had been no talk between the captain and me on the subject of our danger until the morning of the fourth day dawned. I don't know how long he had been up, or even if he had been to bed at all. I was just out of bed, staring out of the window at nothing; for that was as much as could be seen out of the little window, for sky and water were leaden alike, and seemed to have merged one into the other.

"Peggy, girl," he said, in his loving way, as he came in and saw me.

"Is there any change?" I asked, going over to him to kiss him.

"No, my girl."

"And there is no harbor we could make?"

"Ah! Peggy, if we made the harbor it would do us no good; we should be killed by the people. No white man is allowed in Japan except only in the treaty ports, and they are all on the other side of the island."

"But they would not harm shipwrecked folks, surely?"

"Yes, Peggy."

He smiled at me, but his tone was hopeless, and I saw despair in his eyes.

"But we are no worse off than last night?" I said quickly.

"The rudder head is sprung; we're in the trough now."

I understood now why we wallowed so without much plunging; and I had heard enough sailor talk to know that the end might come now at any moment.

I have never since faced death as I did then; and I do not know how death could seem much nearer. I saw it in the water that towered above us and dashed down on the deck, and, more than all, I saw it in the eyes of the good man who had been so kind to me.

I might say I was brave and faced the event calmly, for calm I certainly was; but it was not the calmness of bravery: it was a sort of numbness and stupor. I have heard that men finding themselves in the jaws of a tiger or lion have that same sensation of calmness; as if the brain worked clearly while all sensation was dead.

"How soon will it happen?" I asked quietly enough.

"Any time."

The words were hardly spoken when the mate thrust his head in at the companion hatch and cried:

"Breakers! starboard!"

The captain leaped up the companion way and I after him, for I knew that I might as well be on deck now as to remain there and go down like a rat in a trap.

I cannot say that I made my way to the mizzenmast, for I was thrown there by a plunge of the vessel; and there I clung to the wreck of cordage, which was all that was left of the standing rigging. I looked about and saw the men clinging to whatever was available, and staring doggedly over the starboard side.

I looked there, too, and through the thick, gray pall I saw looming up a giant, shapeless form; and now I could distinguish above the shrieking of the wind that roar of the breakers which is like no other sound, and which always carries despair to the heart of a sailor.

We were going broadside on, with the waves towering high above us, and pouring down upon us constantly. Nothing but a miracle could save us. Once through the drenching deluge I caught the eyes of the captain, who was standing upright somehow, and the look that was in them will haunt me forever.

Then came a shock, and a pounding, swirling of mountains of water over the deck. I was torn from the cordage and carried through a semi-darkness to what I had no doubt was my death in the raging waters. I was conscious of a humming in my ears and of a terrible blow. Then I was senseless.

When I came to my senses again I could hear the roaring of the water and the screaming of the wind, but I was motionless—the rocking and the plunging were over.

It seemed to me as if an age might have elapsed since my losing consciousness; and I never did know how long a time it was. I found myself tightly and painfully wedged under a spar and upon the deck; but why the vessel was motionless, and why I was not drowned, I could

not guess, for I could see nothing in the position I was in.

By squirming and pushing and pulling as the opportunity offered, I contrived to free myself, and crawl out of my uncomfortable situation, though still half dazed and giddy as I stood up.

A cry of dismay broke from my lips as I looked about me and comprehended what had taken place. I felt as if a miracle had happened in my favor. I was in the extreme fore part of the bark, which was tightly jammed in between two jagged splinters of rock that rose up out of the boiling cauldron of water.

The main portion of the vessel had been wrenched off by the fearful force of the waves, leaving, besides the part I stood on, only a submerged skeleton, which now showed its torn ribs as the waves receded, and now disappeared as they came rushing on again.

Where was the captain? Where was the crew? Alas! I could guess, but not make certain answer. The feeling of loneliness that came upon me was overwhelming, and swallowed up all other sensations for the moment.

"Captain! captain!" I cried out, with all the force at my command. "Is anybody here?"

The roar of the waves drowned my feeble voice, and I crept back as far as I could, conscious of my impotence and of my littleness. I seemed to myself all alone with the world.

What I did now was mechanical, though inspired by that love of life which is the strongest instinctive feeling implanted in us. The onrush of a particularly huge wave set the bit of deck under my feet to trembling, and made me know that I was still in danger.

I had been thinking that my situation was the worst that could be, but it was plain I was in error. I looked quickly above me at the rocks and saw that I might reach safety by climbing them. Another blow from a wave, which sent the spray all about me, decided me, and

I climbed on the rail and thence to the side of the rock.

I was cold, wet, and utterly miserable, and it was well for me, no doubt, that I was forced to move and exercise all my strength and agility in scaling the almost precipitous wall.

Occasionally drops of spray would reach me as I went up, but I could see that each foot higher took me further from harm, though what I should find at the top when I reached there I was yet to discover, for I could see nothing from where I had been or where I was.

I have sometimes wondered if I could have climbed that wet cliff under better circumstances; certainly, it was a marvel that I did so then; but I accomplished it finally and found that with a little more effort I could get across to a greater rock where I would be in entire safety from the waves.

This effort I made, and was presently standing on a broad surface, which I have since calculated to be about half an acre in area. It formed the top of a lonely rock implanted apparently in the open waste of waters; for in the pall of clouds that hung over everything I could not see a hundred yards distant.

I looked dismally about in every direction, and then crept into the shelter of an inequality on the surface, and there crouched down, surely the most wretched and loneliest little girl in all the world.

My friends were all torn from me and lying at the bottom of the cruel ocean, and I was alone, without food or fire, wet and forlorn. I might be miles and miles away from land; or if I were near it, it might be that I would be rescued only to be killed by those bloodthirsty Japanese, who so hated all foreigners.

I believe that was the only time in my life when I was quite hopeless; but I never have any difficulty in forgiving myself for losing courage under those circumstances.

Fortunately, a child knows too little to realize fully the meaning of any of the things that happen to it; so I, however wretched, was yet able to fall asleep in my wet clothes on the top of my rock, and to wake up with a new life and a new hope animating me.

The wind had gone down and the clouds had lifted, so that there was not the same sense of terrible oppression to weigh upon the spirits. The waves were higher than ever, perhaps, and when I crept to the edge of the rock to look down at the wreck I discovered that it had been carried away.

There was cause for gratitude, and I was grateful enough. Suppose I had remained on the wreck? I drew back with a sigh of thankfulness, and stood up to have another look about me. And now I discovered that my rock was about half a mile or a little more from the mainland, with a rolling sea between. And that it was Japan I had no doubt; for I could plainly see houses with the odd, concave roofs, such as I was familiar with from the pictures in my geography.

Only a half-mile away—a distance I could swim when the waves went down; but what would happen to me when I reached that strange land? I knew I must go there, since there was no way of sustaining life where I was.

CHAPTER XXI

IN A STRANGE LAND

IT was a fortunate thing for me that I had been brought up as I had been; for if I had been less robust and hardy I must have succumbed to the privations which I suffered for the two days and nights I remained on the lonely, wave-beaten rock.

The agony of thirst I was spared, because of the water that had collected in the depressions on the top of the rock from the rain which had fallen during the storm. The lack of food I endured well enough, knowing that a few days without, if I had water, would amount to very little except in the way of discomfort. My chief trouble was from the wet and cold combined.

Not that it was so very cold, either, but that I was wet through and through, and could keep warm only by exercising; and if there had been anyone to see me skipping about and going through various arm and leg exercises I would surely have seemed insane.

I did at the first what would have been thought the height of folly by a person used to the conventional way of looking at life on the physical side: I removed all my wet clothing—and it was all wet—and wrung each garment out as thoroughly as possible; then secured each piece under a heavy stone to dry out in the wind as well as might be, while I crept down one side of the rock, and let the spray from the breaking waves dash over me.

The shock certainly did me good, as I had hoped it would, and I climbed back to the top again, and took a few minutes of the most violent exercise I could. Then,

when I was in a glow, I put on wet shirt and drawers and shoes and stockings to let them dry on me, while I left the jacket and trousers to dry in the wind for as long as I could keep up sufficient exercise to maintain warmth.

It was a long time before the garments I had on became dry, but they did become so before night fell, and so did the trousers, finally, by dint of waving them in the wind and shaking them.

I do not recommend my plan to anyone who can find a better, but it served my purpose, and I did not catch a cold. Not that I had been afraid that I would, however, for I had never had one. I was thinking only of my comfort.

If I were to guess at the temperature I should say that it was not far from 60° Fahr. in the daytime, and perhaps 10° lower at night; but even that was cold enough to make me cry out with joy at the sight of the sun coming up from behind the mountains to the east of me when the morning of the second day dawned.

How good that warm sun felt as it beat down on me during that day! I took my spray bath on the side of the rock, and dressed myself in my now altogether dry clothing, and was as comfortable as could be expected of a girl who was ravenously hungry, and who was filled with the most dismal forebodings as to what the future had in store for her.

Naturally I did a great deal of serious thinking. In the first place, I had found that I had been obliged to climb much lower on the rock to get a bath that morning, which fact told me that, even allowing for difference in the tide, the water was receding. And this reflection had caused me to look more carefully to the land side, by which I learned that the distance to land was already lessened by fully half.

Having lived so near the coast all my life, I knew about tides, and had wit enough to examine the rock near

the water to determine whether the tide was ebb or flood. When I discovered that the tide must be flood, judging from the absence of any marks on the face of the rock near the water, I cried out for joy, judging that at the lowest ebb there would be very little water between me and the land.

I kept myself sheltered from the sight of anyone on land by keeping on the lower side of the rock, which fortunately happened to be on the water side. I took this precaution, although I had not seen any persons moving about on the shore, for I knew that the houses on the slope of the hills must contain inhabitants.

And on the afternoon of the second day I learned that my judgment had been correct, for as the tide ran out a number of persons came down to pick up driftwood and other things that had been washed up by the waves, and were left on the long flat which lay between me and the shore.

You may be sure I studied them anxiously, and they came near enough at last to enable me to see them distinctly, the tide going out until there remained less than two hundred yards of water on the flat.

If I had only been sure of a kindly disposition toward me I could have watched them with wonder and interest instead of with gnawing anxiety. I cannot say how many there were on the beach, but as many as fifty, I am sure, counting men, women, and children; and not one of them had on a stitch of clothing.

From this fact, and because they moved about among each other with the utmost calmness, as if they found nothing immodest or peculiar in their nakedness, I judged them to be savages of the lowest type.

And yet the most singular thing was that I did not once hear a harsh word or witness a rough act on the part of anyone. Indeed, they seemed a very quiet and happy people, and, if I had not been told of their cruelty and their murderous ways, I think I should have shown

myself to them, instead of hiding so sedulously and peering out between two rocks.

The plan I had arrived at, as a result of all my thinking on the subject, was to take advantage of the next low tide, which would come during the night, and make my way to the mainland.

It was a choice of evils. I could not remain where I was without starving to death, and, on the other hand, if I fell into the clutches of those barbarians I should be killed. There was, however, a bare possibility that I might cross over and reach the other side of Japan where the foreigners were permitted to live.

Over all this planning you may be sure my heart was in my throat; and in spite of that buoyancy of hope which is natural in all young persons, and particularly so in me, I think, I had a foreboding that I was undertaking the impossible.

I knew nothing of the country, not even which way would take me to the other side; for when the sun had risen and I had discovered which way east lay from me, I found that it was in the direction, judging from the trend of mountains on the coast, in which I had supposed the south to lie.

I think I would have stripped off my clothes and gone naked to make myself look like a native, only that I had seen that they were dark-skinned, while I was as white as could be.

When the tide rose again the gatherers of wreckage drew away from the shore, and I saw nothing more of them. Then I waited, drinking water to drown my hunger, and succeeding better than one would suppose who has not tried it, until it was late enough for me to sleep.

I was to be up in time for the next ebb, which would be at its lowest at about four o'clock in the morning. I meant, however, to try to cross over before that time, because I was afraid I might be seen by any especially early risers in the hamlet on the hillside.

There was no danger that I would oversleep; my empty stomach and my anxiety would be sure to effectually prevent that; so I lay down in my little nest under the lee of the rock and took what rest I could.

The wind had changed and was blowing off shore now, gently but steadily, and was doing so still when I waked up. I think by the state of the tide that it must have been about two o'clock in the morning when I started up. I remember that the moon was near its last quarter, and had risen so as to throw a reasonable light on the flat.

I was grateful for that, as it enabled me to pick my way down the side of the rock, where I found sufficient foothold to remain waiting for the water to go out.

I don't suppose that anyone can imagine what a joy I felt in discovering that my rock, instead of being surrounded by water at low tide, was really left in dry communication with the mainland; so that all I had to do was to choose my steps carefully for a while, and then come to sand as hard as a wooden floor.

It was the storm that had driven the water up so high; and now that the ocean was still again, the sands lay uncovered at low tide. I understood it perfectly well from having seen the same thing in a tidal river about a mile from the farm.

I did not stop to speculate on the matter, as may be imagined, but with the feeling that I might now be saying farewell to my life, I crept over the flat toward where the shore lay.

I don't know that I need to describe what my sensations were as I drew nearer and nearer that land where I and all my kind were hated so bitterly that death was the easiest punishment the natives could inflict for intrusion. What a girl could feel, I felt, I suppose; excepting that as I had been trained to self-reliance, I acted more boldly and felt more nearly as I acted than the average girl in my country.

But even with the utmost boldness I could summon or

simulate I took each step in a tremor of fear, and with eyes and ears alert for any sight or sound. When I finally reached the shore I was utterly at a loss for a direction that led to safety; and I think there was a moment when I gritted my teeth and almost vowed to put an end to my anticipations of horror by going to one of the houses on the hillside and delivering myself up.

I think the very thought of such a bit of cowardice nerved me, however, so that I was able to start on and enter the forest which came down almost to the high-water line.

An older and more experienced person, I am sure, would have been appalled at the notion of carrying out such a plan as I proposed to myself; but my heart grew lighter the moment I found myself actually in a forest; shelter and hiding seemed so much more likely there.

It is true I had no notion of what direction I was taking, but as my true course was a matter of chance, anyhow, I did not so much care. I stumbled and fell innumerable times, but as I came to no opening, nor saw any indications of houses, I minded nothing else.

When daylight came I waited until I could find a thicket into which to creep for hiding, and then settle down for the day, it being my intention to travel only by night.

CHAPTER XXII

A RESCUE

I SLEPT for several hours in my retreat, and waked to hunger and thirst. I sat up, trying to think of other things, but with my mind always reverting to the idea that I was hungry and thirsty, and that I could not live on nothing and walk across to the other side of Japan.

All the difficulties of the situation crowded upon me in one insistent group, until I started up determined to risk everything for water and food. I found I was giddier than I had been before, but that left me in a little while as I pushed on through the woods.

Fortunately, I found a lovely little brook that splashed and sang the sweetest music that ever fell on mortal ears. I drank my fill of the cool water, which satisfied the worst of my hunger, and left me with nothing worse than a feeling of weakness.

I came across no human beings, but did find some delicious-looking fruit growing on trees near an open glade. There were no signs of human habitation, so I concluded the trees were wild. I plucked some of the fruit, which was of a reddish color and looked very like tomatoes. I hesitated a long time, in spite of my need for food, and finally took but a tiny bit and having chewed it slowly, to discover if it had any warning in its flavor, I swallowed it and waited to discover if the warning came only in its effects.

I might easily have been poisoned by taking such a risk as to eat of an unknown fruit, but I was so faint and

so doubtful of obtaining anything else but what I found in the woods that I took the risk, and was fortunate in having come upon nothing worse than persimmons. This I learned afterward.

My courage was quite restored after eating a half dozen of the fruit; and very good they were, too. Of water there was no lack, as I soon found; for I think there can be no country in the world where there are more brooks than in Japan.

My course was uphill all the time now, and I was glad of this, hoping that when I reached the top of the mountains I should be able to see enough of the country to let me know which direction I should take. In this hope I was disappointed, as it turned out; but in the meanwhile my good fortune had caused me to take a way through the woods unfrequented by human beings.

I had filled my pockets with persimmons, but I found them all through the woods wherever there was an open space, so that I was no longer in distress for food, though I must admit that, delicious as the fruit seemed at first, it began to taste very flat after a while.

Encouraged by the loneliness of the woods I walked on as long as daylight lasted, and then lay down and slept through the night, with no worse disturbance than the strange noises of animals of which I knew nothing. And I was glad to be up and moving very early in the morning because of the cold, which was quite sharp so high up.

That day at noon I came to the top of the mountains, but, as I have said, I gained nothing in knowledge of the country by being there; for all I saw beyond me was mountains and more mountains. But, oh, how beautiful! It seemed to me that anything I had ever seen before was as nothing to the beauty of this country.

I had found one of those bare, jutting rocks which are so common on mountain tops, so that I could scan the whole valley beneath me. Almost at my feet lay a great

lake, which must have been ten miles in width and whose length was lost in the distant windings of the valley. Along the borders of the lake, as well as throughout the valley and on the hill slopes, were little villages scattered in profusion, the houses looking like fairy structures for grace and lightness.

It was marvelously beautiful, though the sight of the many villages and other signs of human habitation filled me with new fears for the success of my undertaking. But I remembered how well I had done up to this point, and buoyed myself up with the belief that I might still go on unseen.

I went down the mountain toward the lake very cautiously, and soon found that I was coming nearer to houses and people than before. I made several circuits to avoid little clusters of houses, being barked at by dogs, and even pursued by them once, until I made up my mind to go into hiding until early morning.

This I did, and slept better than for many nights, waking refreshed at a very early hour, and starting off full of confidence. I don't know why I should have had any more confidence than usual, unless it was that I had had such a good sleep. Certainly, it was nothing in the nature of premonition, for, as the event proved, my confidence was very far from being justified.

I contrived to reach the border of the lake soon after day had fully dawned and discovered there a smooth, splendidly built road, over which travelers were already passing at long intervals.

I had some difficulty in finding a satisfactory hiding place there, and was contemplating retreating into the woods further back, when I was startled by voices behind me, and darted into a clump of shrubs close by the roadside.

As it turned out, I might have done much worse than this in the way of a hiding place, for as long as I lay there no one had the least suspicion of my presence; and

I was enabled to watch the traffic on the road, which increased as the time went by, though without ever becoming very great. There were odd-looking boats on the lake, too, but they were all some distance away.

As for the people I saw, quaint as they looked to me, I soon had to alter my opinion that they were barbarous; for they were all neatly and well dressed, and conducted themselves in a singularly courteous way toward each other. I made up my mind that it was only the people of the coast who were savages.

The men and women, as well as I could judge, dressed alike, excepting in the matter of headdress. The men had the tops of their heads shaved, while the hair from behind was brought forward in a sort of short pigtail and laid flat down on the shaven spot. The women had their hair done up in the most elaborate fashion.

I saw no hats at all worn, and learned afterward that they were put on sometimes to keep the rain off; but such hats were very wide in the brim and shaped so as to shed the water like umbrellas.

It was all like a dream to me to see these little men and women, in their odd robes, passing along the highway, talking together in the most liquid and soft language I had ever heard, and laughing softly and merrily. And they all seemed so gentle and courteous that I kept saying to myself that it was impossible that they could be as cruel as report said.

But of that I was to learn more. Indeed, I am not the only one who has made the mistake of thinking that because the Japanese are mild and courteous to each other they cannot be fierce as tigers too.

I later learned that I had hidden myself near a temple to which pilgrimages are made, which accounted for the regular if not constant stream of people passing me. At first men, mostly, went by me, but as the day wore on more women than men came; and the latter were usu-

ally accompanied by children—the most fascinating little creatures I ever saw.

There was a retaining wall built opposite me from the water up, to hold the roadway in place, I presume; and my heart was in my throat fifty times because of the way the children would go to the side and hang over the water. The mothers and other women were always frightened, too, and pulled the little ones away, but not once did I hear a cross or loud word.

Finally, what I had feared happened, and one of the children lost its balance and went headlong into the water. The woman in charge of the child gave a scream, and the edge of the wall was crowded in an instant. The mother tried to leap in after her child, but was prevented by the others, who held her and kept her from the edge.

The accident had happened some distance beyond me, so I had an unobstructed view of what took place.

I stopped to consider nothing else but the child, and darted from my hiding place, and was over the wall into the water in less time than it takes to tell.

What I seemed like to them as I went through the air and into the water before their astonished eyes I cannot tell; but I believe now that my yellow hair, my white skin, and my strange garments must have given them the thought that I was the Evil One in person.

I caught the child as it came struggling to the surface, and swam with it to the wall, where I held it while the mother stooped over and with horror and fear in her eyes snatched the child from me.

Then two men, who had come up by this time, leaned over and caught my hands as I held them up, and pulled me out of the water. I smiled and thanked them, glad to hear myself speak after so many days of loneliness. They answered in their own tongue, and looked at me curiously; or, rather, in amazement.

They spoke to each other while they stared at me. I

took off my jacket and began to wring it out; whereupon one of the older women, whose teeth, by the way, were as black and as shiny as jet, and whose eyebrows were clean shaven, came forward and gravely led me to the roadside, where she took my jacket from me, talking in a most polite way all the while.

I submitted and yielded up my jacket without a word or sign of protest, having made up my mind that I would make friends with them if possible, and in fact being much cheered by their mildness. One of the other women took my jacket from her, and she then motioned to me to remove the remainder of my clothing, offering to assist me, but showing that she was puzzled by my singular style of dressing.

By this time a considerable crowd had gathered, and those who were informed of what had happened were evidently imparting the strange intelligence to the newcomers. Men, women, and children, filled with curiosity, but conducting themselves with a most extraordinary courtesy, had gathered about me, watching my movements.

Several times the good woman who had constituted herself my maid motioned to me, and urged me with soft-sounding words to undress myself, trying to make out the mystery of my garments with her own fingers; but I drew away and shook my head to make her understand that I would rather suffer the discomfort of my wet clothes than undress before the men.

CHAPTER XXIII

BATHED IN PUBLIC

IMAGINE, if you can, the predicament in which I found myself! There I was, in the heart of a strange country, surrounded by a strange people, whose words and ideas were as foreign to me as could possibly be.

I had been skulking through the country in terror of my life, and now was face to face with the people I had been so afraid of, finding them gentleness itself, but odder than I had ever supposed any people could be.

They talked in kindly tones, and in the most pleasing, liquid language I had ever heard, but not one word was there that I could recognize; nor could I even make out what they wished of me, excepting that I was to take off my clothes; and that I would not do before all that crowd—not if I caught my death of cold by keeping them on.

Either they came to understand this, or another idea came to them, for of a sudden the pleasant-faced woman with the shiny black teeth and shaven eyebrows caught me by the hand and said something with a gentle smile. I knew I was to follow her, or, rather, go with her, for she retained hold of my hand while she led me away.

The crowd, growing larger and larger all the while, followed us, staring at me with quite as much curiosity as I stared at them. They must have seen I was a child, just as I could distinguish among them which were children and which adults; but I am sure I must have seemed to belong to a race of giants, I was so large in

comparison to them. Why, the woman who led me must have been at least thirty years old, and she was not as tall as I.

All wet and bedraggled as I was, I could not get over the feeling of wonder at them: they were so odd, so different from any other folk I had ever seen or heard of: they were so differently dressed, and had such bright-colored, graceful robes.

I confess I was beginning to feel very happy, and was ready to smile at the absurd stories I had heard of the ferocity of the Japanese. And I was beginning to feel ravenously hungry, a thing I would have fought against if I had not begun to feel that I surely would now have a good meal. I knew they ate rice in Japan, and oh! how good the thought of a bowl of steaming rice was to me!

There were so many about me and so much talk and confusion that I could not tell how far I was taken, but presently a very large building stood before me, which I supposed must be a temple, but which later I discovered was only a tea house, or sort of hotel.

At the entrance they all, men, women, and children, took off their shoes—or clogs and sandals I should say—and arranged them in a long row up against the house; and, when it was noticed that I had not taken mine off, my conductress, with an air of polite wonder, pointed to my shoes so expressively that I could not make a mistake. I immediately took them off, and my stockings as well; and I could see that they were objects of infinite wonder.

By this proceeding I, in my ignorance, was convinced that I was being taken into a temple, which, perhaps, they would have deemed defiled by my shoes; but the fact is that the Japanese cannot abide dirt, and so always leave their shoes outside of the house.

My shoes being off I expected to be admitted into the house, but someone pointed to my dripping garments,

and without remonstrance from my conductress, who evidently had taken complete charge of me, I was led around to another side of the building. And I was grateful for the change of plan as soon as I discovered that we were followed only by a few of the women.

We went into a sort of paved courtyard, in the middle of which there was a well. Here we stopped and once more I was solicited to remove my garments, the intricacies of which were apparently too puzzling to my new friends.

The place, even if out of doors, seemed secluded enough, and I was beginning to feel the chill unpleasantly, so I undressed without further bidding, and presently had removed my last garment.

There were exclamations of surprise, which I soon saw were occasioned by the revelation of my sex; and I knew then that I had been mistaken for a boy. Afterward I learned that caricatures of foreigners were in circulation, showing how foreign men and women were dressed.

What puzzled me was how, thinking me a boy, they had not turned me over to the men to be taken care of; and naturally I turned cold enough at the mere thought.

Not that there was much time given me for reflection of any sort, however, for as soon as I was nude, and even while they were expressing their surprise in the gentlest of gestures and softest of words and smiles, they had drawn a bucket of water from the well and had thrown it over my shoulders.

I caught my breath at the cold shower, but smiled encouragement at them, and they threw two or three more over me. Then towels were produced from somewhere, and two of the white-toothed girls began rubbing me assiduously, and with a skill that proved their familiarity with the office.

Finally, when I was in a delightful glow, a thin robe was put on me, and over that another a little thicker and

of a different color, and over that still another of a darker color than either of the others, and heavier. The thin robes were tied about my waist by means of a slender cord, while the outer robe was held in place by a broad, heavy band of cloth, which was fastened in the back.

I was as much a Japanese girl as a golden-haired, gray-eyed girl could be; but I fancy I looked as awkward as I felt when they put a pair of clogs on my feet and led me across the yard to the house.

The skirts of the robes clung closely to my legs so as to nearly trip me when I walked; so that I was fain to take a hasty look at my companions to see how they contrived to get over the ground so prettily. Well, they shuffled and turned their toes in; so I imitated them as well as I could.

But I was soon over thinking of my awkwardness in the flood of shame that overwhelmed me when on coming nearer to the house I discovered that my toilet had been witnessed by fully a hundred men, women, and children, who had gone through the house instead of around it.

I don't know what color my cheeks were, but I know they burned furiously, and that as I passed, eyes downcast, through the company of spectators, I would have stumbled a dozen times had I not been upheld by a companion on each side of me.

I was both ashamed and indignant, but I would have wasted words had I tried to express my feelings, so I sat down in the room upstairs to which I was led, and prepared to endure whatever these singular people decided I must do.

The first thing done was to pull out funny little pipes, and smoke two or three whiffs—as much as the pipes held. They very politely offered me a pipe and some tobacco, which I as politely refused. It was marvelous how the gentle courtesy of these people moved me

to imitation; though I know that I must have made but a poor showing of manners in comparison with them.

I had no sooner refused tobacco than tea was brought in and served in the funniest, tiniest, prettiest little cups. I ought to say that we were all this while sitting on the floor, for there were no chairs, no tables, no furniture of any sort in the room.

I had determined to copy my hostesses to the extent of my ability, and had tried to sit down as they did. I rested my knees together on the floor and sat upon my heels, the upper part of my feet in this way resting on the floor, too.

This was not difficult to do for a period of five minutes, perhaps; especially as the floor was of matting, stretched over small frames, which were laid together like great, rectangular tiles and made a soft, yielding surface. But after a few minutes my feet began to ache so that I was forced to make a compromise and sit on the floor between my heels, with my knees apart.

Of course, I made a very spread-eagle sort of figure, compared with the trim, dainty little creatures about me, but it was the best I could do, and I tried to explain to them that their way was too difficult for me.

Another thing I felt obliged to explain was that I was hungry. I found this very easy, and I suppose the same signs would have expressed the same idea in any part of the world. I pointed to my mouth and then to my stomach, and, to make the pantomime more effective, rubbed my stomach, and made a wry face to express how much I needed food.

I was understood at once. An expression of kindly commiseration filled their faces, and one of the white-toothed girls with eyebrows jumped up and ran away in the odd, shuffling fashion the women had in the house. You might think it would look ungainly for a woman to turn her toes in and shuffle over the floor, but you

would be mistaken, for I have never seen anything more graceful.

In the meanwhile I had seen nothing of either the child I had saved or his mother; but at this juncture they came shuffling, or I might better say gliding, into the room; the child all spick and span in dry clothes, and his face shining with its new cleanliness, and the mother serene and smiling.

The child was shy and stared hard at me, but was never anything but polite. They both came straight up to me and bowed very low, their heads coming down very gradually, and both of them sucking in their breath with a sort of low, hissing sound.

I did not know what to do. I was certain that I could not imitate them; so I had the inspiration to get up and bow in my own way to them, bowing lower than I would have bowed in my own country, of course, for how could I help it, with them going down in that ceremonious way?

Then they sat down and I sat down, too, and the mother delivered herself of a little speech, which I had no doubt was one of grateful acknowledgment to me for what I had done; and I listened and smiled as if I understood.

A little later some steaming rice was brought in in a beautiful bowl, some mixture of eggs, which was like an omelet, only not so delicate as we make, but very delicious; some small dishes with pickled fish, I think, in one, and some fruit in others. I know there were some small oranges, the skins of which came off without any trouble, and which had no seeds.

There were no knives and forks, but there were chopsticks, and something like a spoon, and I had no difficulty in eating my food. Ah, how good it was! I had not fully realized how good it was, nor how hungry I was, until I was half done.

I only wish I could convey any idea of the charm and

the courtesy of the dear little women who entertained me that morning. I am sure that harm to me was as far from their thoughts as anything could be. And yet all the while that I sat there in such comfort and delight, trouble, and very serious trouble, too, was brewing for me.

CHAPTER XXIV

SENTENCED TO DEATH

I KNOW that trouble was brewing while I was congratulating myself on the gentleness of the people I had fallen among, because the remains of my meal had hardly been cleared away when there were a bustle and sounds of sharp words somewhere below us, followed by the entrance into the room of half a dozen men armed with swords.

The cries and looks of consternation of the kind creatures who had been entertaining me so hospitably made me aware that my fortune had taken a sudden turn for the worse; but I think the grim faces of the men would have informed me of it anyhow.

I started to my feet and looked about me, thinking involuntarily of escape, but putting the thought instantly from me as I realized how absolutely futile any attempt of the sort would be. The women about me rose, too, and began to talk all at once, making gestures toward me and pleading, apparently. This was particularly the case with the woman whose child I had rescued from drowning. She talked earnestly, pointing from her child to me.

For answer the leader of the men issued a curt command: and in the twinkling of an eye I was seized and bound with my hands behind my back. I would not have believed the thing could have been done so quickly to one so strong and agile as I. But I was to learn some things as to strength and agility and swiftness before I left Japan.

The revulsion of feeling from utter security and peace to all the possibilities of danger set up such a terror within me that, forgetting that I could not be understood, I turned to the women who stood cowering around the room, and cried piteously:

"I haven't done any harm. Tell them that I saved the little boy's life!"

Then the uselessness of my appeal struck me and I fell into silence and into the dullness of fear which is easily mistaken for courage. But I wasn't feeling brave at all. On the contrary, my mind was instantly assailed by all the stories I had heard on the bark about the cruelty of the Japanese and their hatred of foreigners.

The mother of the little boy was the first of the women to recover from the fright they had all been cast into by the appearance of the armed men, and she came nearer to me and said something in her gentle way that seemed to promise me her help.

Whatever she had said, however, had no effect upon the men, who led me away without any unnecessary roughness, to be sure, but with a grim implacability of manner that boded little good for me.

There was an odd-looking boat drawn up by the side of the lake, and into it I was taken. The armed men entered with me, and four oarsmen dipped their long blades into the water and sent the boat with wonderful swiftness across the lake.

I looked sadly back to catch a glimpse of a friendly face, and my eye was caught by the sight of the mother of the little boy, her robe tucked up into her belt so that her legs were all bared, starting on a run along the road that bordered the lake.

She cried out something to me, which of course I did not understand, but I was cheered with the thought that she intended to make an effort in my behalf. And yet, when I reflected on the little consideration the men had

given the women in the tea house, I did not find myself cheered.

Alarmed as I was, I do not believe I had any proper realization of the peril I was in. I learned that later. The fact was that Japan at this time was in the midst of a civil war, and had, roughly speaking, two capitals. One capital was at Tokio, or Yedo, as it was then called, and the other at Kioto. The Shogun reigned at Yedo, and it was he who had made treaties with the foreigners, permitting them entrance into the country at certain ports. The Mikado reigned at Kioto and was opposed to the entrance of foreigners into the country. So bitterly opposed was he that his followers killed all foreigners on sight.

Now I had come ashore, as I discovered later, in the province of Wakasa; I had made my way, by something like a miracle, across the mountains to the Lake of Biwa, on which I was now with my captors. Kioto was between twenty and thirty miles away. I was in the very heart of the Mikado's country, where it was held a matter of patriotism to hate foreigners, and a matter of duty to kill them.

Luckily for me I did not know as much as this at the time I was being rowed across the beautiful waters of the lake, or I am sure I should have been frightened into doing something foolish in an effort to escape what would have seemed to me my certain doom.

The men studied me with a solemn dignity that was far from reassuring me. I studied them in the hope of finding a kindly look, a softening line on their faces. I remember, too, wondering if they found my big eyes, white skin, and curly golden hair as odd as I found their narrow eyes, dark skin, and strangely arranged straight black hair.

I needn't have wondered so foolish a thing, for, of course, they found my appearance odd, and ugly, too, no doubt. Since that time I have learned not to object

to things simply because I am not familiar with them, whether they be ideas or concrete matters.

We brought up alongside of a little wharf after a while, and I was motioned to get out, which I did readily enough, for I was anxious to know what was to be done with me.

There was evidently a village or small town at this point, for I could see a great many houses, and within a few minutes a great many people of all ages and both sexes had gathered to look at me. It was impossible to believe that a people could have such placid, gentle faces and harbor wicked designs; so I went along in the midst of my guard considerably cheered.

I was taken directly to a large house with beautiful grounds about it, all beautifully kept and elaborately laid out in tiny lakes, bridges, walks, hills, and brooks, with solemn-looking cranes standing in the water, with little houses built on little islands in the little lakes, and with the most wonderful flowers growing in clumps here and there.

I knew pretty well that this must be the home of a great personage, and afterward it turned out to be the residence of a gentleman—one of a class known as samurai.

I was taken into the house, and brought into the presence of a dignified assemblage of men, all of whom looked coldly at me for a moment, and then went on with a hearing of some sort that was taking place.

As I became accustomed to the surroundings, I noticed that the case of another prisoner was being considered. It was a man who, like me, had his hands bound behind him. He looked so stolid and hopeless that my heart misgave me more than ever. Presently he was asked some questions, whereupon he burst forth into a voluble flow of words.

He was listened to in perfect silence, as if it were intended to give him all the opportunity he needed or

wished to explain his case. He began to hesitate after a while, stopping and looking from one cold, stern face to another, then going on again; but each time he recommenced it was in a more hopeless tone; and finally, he stopped suddenly as if he felt the uselessness of talking.

A few brief questions were asked him, which he answered as briefly. Then the one among the men who seemed the most important turned to some men, armed with swords like my captors, who were standing at one side, and addressed them in stern, curt tones.

They bowed low, surrounded the bound man and pushed him out of the room. I shuddered with horror; for without understanding a word, I knew that the man was going to execution. The awfulness of it was the impossibility of doing a thing in resistance.

Now I was pushed by one of my guards to where the condemned man had stood; and there I was left alone, while my guards stood to one side exactly as the guards of the other prisoner had done.

I wanted to scream out something of pleading, but could not have found my voice then if I had tried. I wonder now how I contrived to stand there instead of sinking in a heap on the floor, my legs trembled so. I suppose it was all through that strange pride which makes us, poor human creatures, so anxious for appearances, even in the face of death.

Anyhow, I did stand before those stern men, whose narrow, almond-shaped eyes looked very sinister to me, and I know I kept my head up, and put on as bold an appearance as I could, notwithstanding my legs weren't fit to support me, and my heart was beating loud enough to be heard almost.

They all studied me now very carefully, their eyes going from my golden curls to my white, bare feet, which showed below the robes I wore; for they were a little short for me, according to the fashion of the country. Then the principal personage asked me a question, which,

of course, I could not answer; but I was in a mood to be very polite, so I told him that I did not understand his language, but that I was not in his country through any desire on my part, but altogether by accident.

I don't know but I should have gone on and described the shipwreck if he had not interrupted me by asking a question of one of the guards, who responded by producing from a man behind him my still wet garments, and putting them on a cloth in front of my interrogator.

The trousers, and jacket, and shoes were held up and examined with a gravity out of all proportion to the value of the clothes; but I knew, alas! that they were being used as evidence against me, to prove the one hideous crime of which I was guilty—being a foreigner.

Of course, they had known before I was brought in that I had been found in the heart of their country; that was evident from the first; but I hoped one of the guards might tell how I had discovered myself in order to save a little boy from drowning.

I don't believe any such story was told, however, although there was some explanation made of how I came to be in Japanese costume instead of in my own; and how the latter came to be wet. I could understand that such an explanation was going on from the gestures that were made, indicating first my wet clothes and then the garments I wore.

The great man turned to those about him, and had a few words with them. I knew my fate was being decided, and yet I could not say one word in my own defense. It was more like a nightmare than anything else I could think of, excepting that it was so terribly real, and that I could speak, which one often cannot do in a nightmare.

And I did speak. I went nearer to them and pleaded with all my might, hoping my tones might convey what my words would not! but they paid no attention to me whatever, going on with their talk until they were

through, and then turning to the guard, just as had been done with the other prisoner.

The fatal words were spoken and the guard surrounded me. I knew afterward that I was to be taken out for execution, but then I only suspected it; but even the suspicion was enough to freeze me with horror.

CHAPTER XXV

A FRIEND IN NEED

I RESISTED the men when they urged me toward the exit of the room, and tried to get away from them to throw myself on my knees before the nobleman who had condemned me; but the men held me firmly, and would have carried me but for a sudden and most grateful diversion that came at that instant.

The woman whose child I had saved darted, hot and panting, into the room, crying out something passionately to the men who held me, and then, dropping on her knees before the nobleman, laid her forehead on the floor between her two hands, and burst into broken words of pleading.

The nobleman said something to the men who held me, and they brought me back to where I had stood before, retiring as at first. What I should do I did not know, but decided that no pride should stand between me and safety, so dropped on my knees beside my one friend, and waited the issue.

There was some conversation passed between them, questions on his part, answers on hers, he curt and stern, she always gentle and submissive, and then she began to speak, without interruption from him; and I knew very well from her gestures that she was describing how I had saved her child.

When she had finished the nobleman asked her more questions, but now with an air of interest, as if he had been somewhat affected by what she had said. I tried hard to guess at what they were saying, but could get no clew to it from either tone or gesture.

Finally, I could see that she was making a vigorous affirmation of something, which he finally answered by holding up my trousers to her. Then I realized that it was a question of my sex.

The woman smiled, rose to her feet, and motioned me to do the same. I obeyed implicitly, wondering what was to come, but prepared to do her bidding to the best of my ability.

But she evidently wished nothing of me, speaking a few words more to the nobleman, as if asking permission to do something, which permission he granted, as I could see. Instantly she put her arm behind me, and my heart leaped high as I felt her fingers busy there. I had no doubt she had won my freedom and was loosing my bonds.

But no, it was not that she was occupied with; she was untying the broad belt that went about my waist, and when that was off, her nimble fingers had snatched away the inner cord that was about my waist to hold up the inner garment; and before I knew what was going to happen I stood there nude.

Oh! the shame of that moment! I shall never forget it. What manner of people were these, that made so light of the sacred privacies of one's person?

I cried out, but I was powerless. I could not cover my nakedness, nor could I utter a word in remonstrance, knowing nothing of the language. I did what I could —dropped on my knees, and leaned forward until my face touched the floor.

The movement was a wiser one than I had guessed; for my robes hung at my bound hands behind my back, so that the act of kneeling and bending forward threw them somewhat over me. I remained thus, a prey to shame and indignation, until I felt myself covered again, and my hands unbound.

Then I gathered my clothes about me and stood up, hardly daring to look at the men who had seen me, until

the nobleman spoke to my friend—I was not in the mood to think her friend then, however.

When I looked shyly at the nobleman I could see plainly enough that his mind was not in the least on the spectacle of my nudity, but was already on something quite remote. What he said to my friend must have been reassuring to her, for she immediately dropped on her knees again, and bowed her head to the floor, murmuring soft phrases and sucking in her breath.

Then she rose and took my hand and led me away out of the room, but not out of the house, the guards remaining behind, much to my relief; for if they had followed, I should have been uneasy.

How I wished for a few words in Japanese with which to express my gratitude to the dear little woman who had taken such trouble to save me from the fate which she knew so much better than I was threatening me. Already I had forgiven her for her exposure of me, for I could understand that it had been the means of saving my life, although I still turned hot and cold as I remembered the shame of the sudden disrobing.

I told her warmly enough in my own tongue how grateful I was, as we went along, and I am sure she gathered my meaning from my tone, for she smiled at me very sweetly, and answered me back with such gestures and inflections that I was sure she meant to tell me that I was now out of danger.

I wanted to kiss her in proof of my appreciation of what she had done, but somehow it did not seem as if that were a thing she would understand. I suppose I gained that impression from the fact that she made no motion in that direction herself. I knew that any American mother by this time would have kissed me fifty times over. Later, I discovered that kissing was not one of their customs.

She led me into a room where a number of girls and women were sitting on the floor, gathered about a big

metal pot full of ashes and with a handful of glowing charcoal on the top. They were smoking, using the charcoal to light their funny little pipes by.

They ceased talking when we entered, but did not get up. My companion sank on her knees, and made the usual low obeisance, and all the others made the same quaint salutation. I concluded I might as well do the best I could at it, since it was the custom of the country, and I was anxious to be well received; so I sank down and imitated the others as well as I could, but I am free to say that I know I made no such graceful performance as they did.

The talk at first was plainly nothing but a formal getting acquainted, and I learned later that politeness in Japan involves a great many words. After a few minutes of bowing, and sucking in the breath, and short, soft phrases, the real talk began.

All the while the dark, almond eyes of them all had been regarding me curiously, though never with any rudeness; and as my story progressed, the interest in me became intense, and occasional friendly remarks were addressed to me.

Then tea was brought in and drunk with great ceremony, and pipes were smoked, and my friend was obliged to tell over again, with any new details she could think of, the story of my rescue of the child, and my capture. I knew this as well as if I had understood.

And presently one of the younger girls jumped up and ran away in her odd, shuffling fashion, laughing merrily. Surely there never were such merry, tender, kind-hearted creatures as the Japanese women. They were always laughing, always doing some act of tenderness or kindness.

After a while the little girl came shuffling back, her eyes dancing and musical little giggles exploding from her, as if she really could not restrain her mirth. And when I looked at her to see why she was so gay, behold,

"CAPTAIN! CAPTAIN!" I CRIED OUT, WITH ALL THE FORCE AT MY COMMAND. "IS ANYBODY HERE?"

(*See Page* 132)

"YOU HAVE JAPANESE CLOTHES ON," SHE SAID IN A SUSPICIOUS TONE.
(*See Page* 225)

she had my trousers in one hand, and my jacket in the other, holding them up so that they might be seen.

How merry they all were over those extraordinary garments! And I am sure they must have coined a great number of jests about them; for first one and then another would say something, and then all would break out into the sweetest, most silvery laughter I ever heard.

As for me, I was far from feeling discomposed by having my clothes cause so much fun, but laughed every time they laughed, and felt like laughing, too; as who would not at being in such pleasant company after being in danger of no less than death?

Besides, the laughter was far from mockery or ridicule, but altogether spontaneous, innocent, and childlike. And what was more, I was beginning to think that the clothes were rather odd.

By and by my friend rose, after bowing and saying many polite phrases, and was going. I was following her example as well as I could, when she pushed me down and told me a great deal that I did not understand, though I did make out that I was to remain where I was.

I think my expression must have indicated my concern, for not only she, but all the others, came about me and reassured me by words and gestures and such kind looks as were of more value than the rest. Nevertheless, I was sorry to see my good friend go, and watched her for a final look as she went out of the room.

There was more tea after she was gone, and then two of the little ladies invited me to get up and follow them, which I did readily. I can see them now, one on each side of me, shuffling along with tiny steps, while I strode between them, they chattering gayly to me and to each other.

What with the sight of them in their bright, graceful garments, with their black hair done into odd, fantastic shapes, with funny, frank touches of paint on face

and a sort of bronze on lips, with the merry laughter and liquid tones, with a sweet, subtle odor of things Oriental assailing my nostrils, I think I can realize just how Alice must have felt when she went through the looking glass into her unreal world.

CHAPTER XXVI

A SOCIABLE BATH

THE two little Japanese ladies led me through several rooms of the house, which I could see was a very large one, chattering to each other in soft, low tones, and smiling at me at intervals as if for encouragement.

I think the thing that struck me most was the immaculate cleanliness of everything. There literally was no dirt anywhere. What struck me next was the fact that every room was empty; there was no furniture of any kind whatsoever to be seen—nothing to sit on, nothing to sleep on, nothing to eat from. So far as I could see, it was a house full of emptiness.

The truth was, as I discovered later, that the people sit on the floor, eat from the floor, sleep on the floor. The walls of the houses are of wood, but all the partitions are of thin paper stretched over a framework of wood; and there are not many partitions of that sort. Indeed, I believe there are few houses whose entire floors could not be made into single rooms by sliding aside the light, movable partitions. On the other hand, it would be almost impossible to find a Japanese house without rooms enough for the accommodation of any number of unexpected guests, since it only needs to slide a partition across the floor to make a new room.

But this I learned afterward. At the time I could do nothing but stare about me, wondering at everything, and I may say charmed with everything—from the sweet odor of cleanliness to the gentle gayety of my little

ladies, who glided by my side, putting my Western awkwardness to shame.

They brought me finally into a large room where there sat a lady of greater age than any I had yet seen in the house, and who, by her air of dignity and by the greater state she kept, I knew must be of more importance than the others.

My companions glided over to her; her own attendants moved out of the way, so that I might be more easily seen, and my companions then sat down and bowed their heads to the floor. I did the same in my clumsy way.

I had no doubt then, and was afterward certain, that I had been taken to this lady in order that she might see the strange sight of a yellow-haired foreigner; and I may as well confess now what I learned later: I was considered a marvelously ugly creature. My big, gray eyes, my curly, yellow hair, my white skin, and rosy cheeks constituted so many counts in the indictment against my good looks.

From this lady, after she had satisfied her curiosity, I was taken to the apartments where the children of the house were, and my mortification may be imagined when the cunning little creatures set up such a howl of fright at the sight of me that I had to be hurried away.

I was as much a bogy to those children as a black devil would be to ours, and often during my stay in that land of exquisite art and beautiful flowers, I was the cause of fright to innocent children. Their standards of beauty were different from ours; but so were most of their standards, for the matter of that. Indeed, I think that to the very last I was learning something new and being made to wonder whether their way or ours was the right one.

I had already, without being aware of it, received two lessons in Japanese modesty, and was soon to have another which was to open my eyes. But this happened to be a matter in which I could not radically disagree with

them, having been prepared somewhat by the teachings of my mother.

It was a little after the middle of the afternoon when I was taken to what I afterward learned was a toilet room. I had had some time before a good meal of rice, fish, and fruit, prefaced by a most delicious soup, and had become so friendly and familiar with my new friends that I did not hesitate to do whatever they indicated.

The indication in this case was to remove my clothing, which I did, all the others doing the same. Then we went in nude procession through the house; and a very pretty sight it was, too, for daintier, sweeter bodies human eyes never looked on.

I felt shy and ashamed at first, even though they were all of my own sex, but they conducted themselves with the same sweet, serene composure which had characterized them with their clothing on. I remember thinking then, with another kind of shame, how I had inveighed in my own mind against the absurdity of my not being able to go in swimming with the boys in New York.

Often afterward I had the opportunity to see how little concerned the Japanese were as to their bodies, wearing or putting off their clothes with a thought single to convenience. Even then, though I could not comprehend the meaning of the striking procession, nor grasp the fact that they were as easy nude as clad, I could see that no one had any thought of immodesty.

In a little while I knew what the procession meant; for we came into a large room filled with steam, through which, however, it was easy enough to see objects. We were come for a bath; and already two persons were engaged in the preliminary stage, while several others stood about, either waiting for their turns or ready to receive the bathers as each one stepped out of the baths. I don't know how I can go about a description of the strange scene better than by telling of things as I saw them. Among those who waited were nude men as well

as women; and one of those in the baths was a woman, the other a man.

I stared, of course, at the unwonted sight; but no one paid any attention to me, beyond giving me an occasional smile of encouragement and friendliness, and a phrase or two of good will.

The bath tub was—I should say that there were two tubs—of wood and of such a height that when the person in it sat down the water came to his chin. How hot the water was I did not know by looking, but steam arose constantly from it, and there was a pipe running up through it, conveying heat from a fire burning underneath.

The person in the tub sat quite still for a certain length of time; and I must say that any temptation I had to smile was completely checked by the dignity of the two who sat there steaming and soaking.

When the time came for them to get out, they did so with the same dignity, and gave themselves into the hands, each, of two girls, who began to rub and scrub them, until their already red skins became still more red. When the rubbing was over they were drenched several times over with cold water, and then assiduously dried by their attendant maidens.

What I noticed with no little dubiousness, however, was the fact that the baths were entered by the next in turn without any change of the water. And to make an end of that part of the story, the water was not changed at all; all entering the same water and cooking there in turn. But I would do wrong if I did not hasten to say that I discovered the reason for this seeming want of nicety later. In the first place, fuel is too valuable to be wasted in Japan, and in the next the Japanese are so clean of person that they communicate no considerable dirt to that preliminary bath. Moreover there is no scrubbing nor moving about in the tub, the object of which is only to open the pores.

Well, I watched the men and the women follow each other in the tubs, my notions of more than modesty receiving severe shocks. Indeed, as to my modesty, according to Western ideas, it died a natural death there and then. I realized that I had been silly in my horror at being disrobed on the two previous occasions; and I was prepared to let myself be undressed thereafter according to the will of my new friends.

Finally my turn came, regulated, as I learned later, by the place given me in the household. It was not a high place evidently, for more than I cared to keep count of had taken precedence of me; and, in truth, had I not been afraid of being misunderstood, I would have refused the soaking, and taken only the rubbing and scrubbing.

However, I went forward when I was told to do so, and climbed boldly into the tub. To confess the whole truth I yelled as I went in, for the water was so hot as to scald me. I started to leap out, amid the wondering looks of the onlookers, who naturally could not understand why I cried out; but, with a courage of which I have always been proud, I sank down in the water and let it scald.

I have laughed a great many times since at the predicament I was in, but I was not disposed to laugh then. Besides, I felt silly, for I could not explain why I had yelled out so suddenly.

In a little while the water felt pleasant to me, and I sat there until I was motioned to get out, which I did, with my fair skin colored like a boiled lobster shell. But, oh, how delicious the rubbing and scrubbing was, excepting for a natural tenderness of the skin. As for the cold shower from the quaint little tubs, it was the most delightful sensation I had ever experienced.

Not a bit of soap had been used, and I was as clean as I very well could be. Indeed, to my shame the skin had rolled off of me in the rubbing process until I was

sure all the outer cuticle had been taken off. That I really had my outer skin on when they finished with me was a wonder to me.

It was delightful, too, to be rubbed and wiped dry by the dear little women who attended to me; and I think if I had dared I would have fallen asleep on my feet. I suppose I was worn out with all my travel by night and by my hardships.

After the bath I was led back to the room where we had disrobed, and there I was taken care of by other demure little maids, who brought clothing and put it on me; not the same that I had worn, but better and more complete.

The others had their long, straight black hair hanging down their backs, and hairdressers were busy putting it back into the odd but pretty shapes out of which it had been steamed. My hair, being short, was all in curls about my face and neck; and when I looked at myself in one of their shining metal mirrors, I fancied I looked rather pretty. If I had only known it, they all felt sorry for me for having such curly hair, to say nothing of its being such a horrid color.

The first garment that was put on me was a long piece of silk that reached from the floor to my waist. It was wound about my legs and secured at the waist by a slight cord. How I was to walk with such a garment on me I did not know, and fully expected to fall the instant I tried; but fortunately I remembered in time to shuffle my feet with my toes in, so that I did well enough.

After the silk came several robes of bright colors, ending with the heavier outer one, which was held in place by the broad obi or belt, which I may say here is a thing into which the Japanese women put all their extravagance. I have known the wife of a nobleman to wear one that cost as much as five thousand dollars of our money.

After we were all dressed we had tea. In fact, we had

tea pretty nearly all the time. Then they all smoked their little pipes. By and by we had another meal. It was very much like the previous one, and was served on little lacquered tables about a foot in height.

It was only after this meal, and when darkness had come so that the house was lighted by lanterns in gay colors, that we were joined by the male element of the house. And then I realized that it was as important and desirable to be a man in Japan as in America. Everybody was ready to jump at a look from the men. In fact, the women were forever trying to anticipate the wishes of the men.

We had music on samisen and biwa and drum, and dancing by gorgeously dressed and highly painted girls. As for painting, however, all the ladies of the household did that without any attempt at concealment; rather, I think, trying to make the paint and bronze pleasantly conspicuous.

When it finally came bedtime—I had nodded in spite of myself long before that time—my clothes were taken off by a deft-handed maid, a loose robe was put on me, and I was smilingly bidden good-night. My bed was the floor of a long room, which I was to occupy with a number of other women. My pillow was like a wedge, nearly as sharp on the edge I was to lay my neck on as the blade of an ax. I saw the others place their necks on the instrument of torture, and saw that they must do something of the sort to preserve their headdresses. But as I had only an easily arranged, curly head, I pushed the pillow aside, and stretched out for one of the sweetest sleeps ever girl had.

CHAPTER XXVII

A SERIOUS PROBLEM

I MIGHT go on with the history of each day in that land of delight, but I may not do that unless I would fill many volumes with what might in the end be more entertaining for me to tell than for you to know; so I will pass over a year of my sojourn there, telling only what is necessary to explain where I was and how I came to remain there.

The house I had been brought to, and from which I might have gone to a speedy and unlamented death, belonged to a wealthy and influential member of the samurai class, a retainer of one of the most powerful noblemen in the kingdom; a man who has since risen to occupy very high office.

He was afterward frank enough to tell me that he had sent me off to my death, influenced by my ugliness, but had willingly relented on the prayer of the woman whose child I had rescued, because it had occurred to him that he might learn from me later matters that might be of service to his noble patron, who was near to the Mikado.

How much he really did learn from me I do not know, but I am inclined to believe that I am still his debtor in the matter of information.

He gave instructions to have me kindly treated; and if he had not wished to be taken at his word I am sure he would never have delivered me over to those gentlest, sweetest, truest of creatures, the women of his household. If I came to love them so tenderly that even now the tears start to my eyes at the recollection of them, it

will not seem strange to anyone who can realize what it was to a lonely little girl in a strange land to be accepted with love and sympathy and kindness.

After I had been a few days with my new friends I was taken in a closed litter, carried by two half-naked men, to Kioto, where the Mikado held court. Through the partially closed window of the litter I saw the marvels of that ancient city, as I was rushed through it to the dwelling of the daimio who was the patron of my samurai host.

Here I was shown to the great man, and my case discussed. My host impressed his idea of preserving me for future usefulness on his patron, and I was lucky enough to escape once more. I was sent back to the house on the lake, however, with instructions to be taught the language, to the end that I might be questioned.

All this was because the final, deadly struggle between the Shogun and the Mikado was under way, and because thus far the dealings of the foreigner had been with the Shogun only.

I did not know it then, but learned it later, that only a few miles from Kioto was Hiogo, where there were about as many foreigners settled as might be counted on one's fingers. If I had known it at the time I might have made a dash for liberty, and might have failed; for I know that if I had been met alone anywhere near Kioto by any of those terrible two-sworded fighting men of the Japanese noblemen I would have been cut down in an instant; for they hated foreigners with a bitter hatred.

The language was not difficult to learn. That is, it was not difficult to learn to speak it reasonably well, though quite another matter when it came to reading it, even in the common character used by the uneducated. I never attempted to learn the written language used by the educated classes, which would have been the same as if I had studied Latin at home.

The main thing was that I soon learned to exchange ideas with my friends, and long before the expiration of a year could speak fluently; in the meanwhile learning to love them all more and more, and, I believe, being loved in return.

And yet I could never bring myself to be content with the way the girls lived; so it was fortunate for me that I was looked upon as one not to be held to the same rules as the others. In fact, Oishi, the head of the house, had given orders that I was to be permitted to go my own way, his object being to study the ways of the little foreigner who had been so strangely brought under his observation.

I say little foreigner, but I was really as big as most of the men about me, and much larger than any of the girls, who seemed almost dwarfs by my side. Indeed, I was so much larger than they, that it was some time before they would believe that I was no older than I said. It was only when I began, soon after my arrival among them, to develop into womanhood that they accepted my statement of my age without secret doubts.

The girls had some active games, but not many, so that I turned to the boys there, as I had done at home, for my companions. Because I was a foreigner and was not to be bound by the rules that governed their female kind I was permitted to play with them; and some very good lessons I learned as to the value of skill as against mere strength.

I remember one game we played, which I may call hand wrestling. Foot was put against foot, and then the right hands or the left, as agreed, were darted toward each other and clasped. The game was to overthrow the other without moving the feet.

I tried it first with a dear little fellow, one of the younger sons of the house. I did it reluctantly and to please him, meaning to be very gentle and not throw him

too hard. I believe I lay on my back, with him smiling down at me, in about two seconds. It had been done by a turn of the wrist, and was repeated over and over before I learned enough to even guard myself.

And it was in this, as in almost everything else, those wonderful people did. Some of them, who belonged to a sort of secret society, and who would never reveal to me how they performed their feats, would do the most extraordinary things.

Perhaps it was because I was a child and not able to notice carefully, but often I have stood up to one of these adepts to wrestle, and have gone down at what seemed to me a mere touch of a finger. Certainly they were as swift as a stroke of lightning.

And a terrible use some of them put their skill to, as I was told. If an enemy of the country were to be killed, one of these men would penetrate to his stronghold, and in the midst of his retainers, all on the alert, strike him down. How he could penetrate the crowds, elude the vigilance of his guards, and then draw his sword for the fatal blow, was his secret. And when such a man devoted himself to the murder of anybody, that person put his affairs in order without delay.

That the assassin was put to death with horrible torture afterward was considered of small consequence. He was honored for his deed, not only by his friends, but even by those enemies he had afflicted by his courage and skill.

How loyal they were! The men were loyal to death, as might have been expected of such brave souls; but the women and children were not a whit behind them in this trait.

Their whole teaching brought them to it, and even the stories told for the amusement of the women and children all tended to that end. How delightful the evenings were when the professional story-teller was brought in and we listened to his dramatically told tales! It was

through striving to understand these thrilling stories that I learned the language with the rapidity I did.

There was one story, which I shall give briefly, which will give a good idea of the Japanese notion of truth and loyalty. It was told of a long time ago, but what happened in the story would happen again in thousands of Japanese homes if the need came. It was the consciousness of that fact that made me so admire the Japanese character.

A gentleman—conventionally speaking—fell in love with the wife of his neighbor, and tormented her with his suit. He was rich and powerful, and not a man to be denied lightly, since he could easily bring ruin on the woman's husband.

She begged him to leave her in peace, but he persisted, threatening the worst in his power if she did not yield to his importunities. She held out as long as she could, and then at last told him that she dared not be unfaithful to her husband, but that if her suitor would put her husband out of the way she would give herself to him.

The wretch agreed eagerly to this, and the woman told him he must enter her house that night, go to the sleeping room where the whole family lay together, feel of the heads until he came to one which was wet; that he was to cut off, as it would be her husband's.

He followed her directions, entering the house, which had been left convenient for his purpose, felt of the heads of the sleeping persons, and when he came to the one that had been wet, cut it off with his sharp sword.

He carried it exultingly home with him, believing he had accomplished his end at last; but when he reached a light and looked at the head, he saw that it was the face of the wife that stared at him.

She had cut her hair short and wet it; and then had lain there awake and expecting the murderer.

I have mutilated the story in the telling, but it will

serve to show how far a Japanese woman will go in her loyalty.

But loyalty can be carried too far, and often is by the Japanese woman. I knew of one case where a girl I knew very well went away from her home one day not to return, and I was told that her parents had been in such need of money that they had sold her into prostitution. And she had gone as a matter of course, never dreaming of protesting or refusing.

Indeed, I saw many things done there that I did not like, but I presume that a Japanese coming to this country must see many things that seem to him quite as awful as the things I condemned there.

I remember one thing we talked of a great deal at one time, and which at first I tried to argue was right, but which afterward I felt ashamed of.

I have said that caricatures of the foreigners who were at the treaty ports were circulated in Japan for the edification of those who had not seen the hated white man; and very few had. But, besides this, pictures made by foreigners occasionally made their way somehow into the interior, and were usually brought to me for explanation, the whole family sitting around and listening to me.

Well, once there came a colored fashion plate of a lady in full dress. I remember that her skirts were held out by hoops and all flounced; her hair was confined in a net, hanging down her back. If I am not mistaken that was called a waterfall at home. The waist was cut very low around the shoulders.

I laughed myself when I explained about the hoops, and how they tilted and wobbled; and you may be sure they all laughed, too. Then I was asked about the low neck of the gown, and I answered readily that it was the way our women dressed when they went out in the evening.

"Do you mean," asked the grandmother—a person of

the highest consequence in the house—" that your ladies —virtuous ladies—show their bodies in that way? "

There was a note of reprobation in her tone that struck me with wonder; for I had seen them all nude together, not only with the men of the family but with visitors. And I went in swimming with the big boys quite as a matter of course. In fact I had never known man or woman to hesitate a moment about exposing the person for either convenience or need; so I was altogether at a loss to understand the old lady's tone or —as I looked around—the wondering looks of them all.

" Why, yes," I answered; " but that is all they will do. They would not dream of going nude as you do."

" Not to bathe? "

" Oh, yes, to bathe; but they would not bathe in the presence of men; nor men in the presence of women nude."

" How singular! But why do your ladies dress this way? "

" They consider they look beautiful so, and wish for admiration."

" You surely do not mean that. Perhaps you are so young that you do not understand why it is done."

" Oh, yes, I am sure of it."

" Do you mean that they will not allow their bodies to be seen even when doing a natural and proper thing like bathing, and yet will display the body, or a part of it, in order to attract attention? "

" Why, I suppose that is one way of putting it."

" How strange! " and they all looked at each other in wonder. " We think it modest to be nude when necessity calls for it, but to expose the body for the purpose of having it looked at seems to us very immodest."

And the more I thought it over the more I found myself in accord with their views. At any rate, I have never since had any sympathy with a system which called the body vile, and then used it as if it were so.

Whatever else may be said of the Japanese they are—certainly the women are—as modest and pure as it is possible to be. They never think of using their bodies to fascinate; and being familiar with nudity have no thoughts about it that are not clean and wholesome.

Of course I was too young to see everything that passed before me, and had too little knowledge of the ways of even my own world to be able to judge well of what I did see. But I am sorry to say that I was forced to become aware of some of the unhappiness that underlay the seeming peacefulness of that home.

I had not been an inmate of the house for a year without discovering some of its peculiarities. Alas! it had seemed so serene and calm on the surface; but when I had learned to speak the language, and to understand it even better, I discovered that besides the grandmother, who was the head of the house, and deferred to in all things, and the wife, who was the mother of four children, there were two concubines.

To me the mother was a model of womankind, excepting that she was, perhaps, too obedient and too gentle under provocation; and I do not know why Oishi should have preferred the concubines to her, nor why the grandmother should not have liked her. But, unfortunately, so it was.

I will say for the concubines that they were as modest and polite and gentle as one could wish, and did not seem to me to presume on their greater attraction for the master of the house; and I never heard any sharp or unkind words pass between the grandmother and the wife. But this may have been because Japanese women are taught from babyhood to repress themselves, and to make obedience their first virtue.

Be that as it may, my first intimation of trouble came one day near the end of my first year's stay there, when my own little maid said to me:

"Our master divorces his wife to-day."

I gasped and stared. How could that be? I had not even suspected such a thing. Besides, I had an idea that it took much time to procure a divorce. I had heard of such things at home, but knew little of them.

"Yes," went on O Kiku San, "she goes home to-day."

"And the children?" I asked, sad at the thought of losing her and them.

"Of course they remain," she answered in surprise.

"What has she done, then, that she is sent away without her children? It seems to me she has done nothing wrong."

"Wrong? Oh, no! she is a good woman. Yes, I am sorry for her; but the master wills it so."

That seemed sufficient and final beyond recall. I could not understand, and yet I dared not question either the noble woman I pitied, or the husband whom I condemned.

"But," I persisted, "she must have done something to be treated so."

"The grandmother has never liked her. I wonder she has remained so long."

"But is that reason enough for a divorce in your country?" I demanded.

"It is reason enough if the husband wills it."

"But suppose the wife is not satisfied; can she leave her husband?"

The little maid smiled gently and deprecatingly.

"You do not understand. A mother does not leave her children."

"But must she leave them? May she not take them with her, even if her husband is cruel to her?"

"The children belong to the father, of course," said the little maid. "Besides, what would the mother do with them? Who would take care of them for her? They would starve, do you not see?"

"She could work for them. I would work for mine," I said stoutly.

"A lady work?" demanded O Kiku San. "For me

that is possible; that is why I would not stay with my husband, but divorced him."

"You divorced!" I cried.

"Oh, yes. I did not know his mother was alive when I married him. She was living far away, but came to us when we were married. We could not get along together, so I left him. He was a very good man, too. But I could work, you see; a lady cannot. What would she do?"

I did not know what to say more than that I was sorry and shocked. I wondered how there could be a law which would work so much hardship to anyone as was being worked on this sweet lady.

"What will she do, anyhow?" I asked. "If she cannot work, must she starve?"

"She will go to her parents and be everybody's slave."

"She will see her children regularly at least," I said.

"They will be no more to her than to a stranger. Do you not see that they get everything from their father; so that is only right."

"Right? It is wicked. I would not stand it."

"There is no divorce in your country?" she asked with interest.

"Oh, yes, there is divorce."

"And the children?"

"Why, I know nothing about what happens in my country, but I am sure no one would stand such a dreadful state of things as this. What I think is that the mother would take the children, of course; for they certainly belong more to her than to the father. Why, the mother bears them and nurses them, and has all the care of them; they ought to be hers."

"Ah!" murmured the little maid, "perhaps in your country ladies may work. Here there is nothing for them to do. With us, among the peasantry, it is different. We women work like the men, so that we may do

as we please. I suppose if ladies might work it would be different with them. I don't know."

I didn't know either. It was too deep a problem for me then; not an easy one now; but after thinking it all over I have about decided that if women were independent —economically independent—and might have their own children when they were divorced, easy divorce would—well, I think it would make men a great deal more considerate than they are now that their wives are practically their slaves.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DIVORCE

IF I had been older and had had more experience in the ways of the world, it is altogether likely that I would not have meddled with the private affairs of Sir Oishi, but would have stood silently by to let him divorce his wife at his uninterrupted pleasure.

Such a negative course did not suit my youthful notion of justice and generosity, however, and I at once sought out the little woman who was to be sent away from her home.

She was not sitting, surrounded by her maids, sobbing over her hard fate, as I had half expected to find her, but was quietly getting together such goods as belonged to her, her face as calm and her voice as well modulated as ever it had been. I immediately recognized in that the self-control which is the great lesson constantly taught the Japanese woman.

"I am so sorry," I said to her.

"Do not concern yourself about me," she answered steadily; "I am not worthy of it."

I knew that was only her Japanese way of being polite; for in fact she was truly worthy of all my sympathy, and I told her so with my Western frankness rather than with Japanese circumlocution, thinking the occasion demanded it.

"Oh, yes, you are worthy of it; you are worthy of better treatment than this. Is there nothing to be done? If you have quarreled, can you not make it up?"

"There has been no quarrel," she answered gently;

" there is nothing to be done but for me to go home and ask my parents to receive me back. I suppose I have done wrong in some way. I am sorry to leave my children."

The gentle, mild words and uncomplaining tone seemed very inadequate to the occasion; but what they lacked was made up for in the heart-breaking pathos of her resignation. Tears came to my eyes, though there were none in hers.

" At least," I said, trying to be hopeful, " you will often come to see them. Your parents do not live far away."

She looked at me for a minute in silence, and I could see that the maids were looking too.

" In your country," she asked slowly, and with the first catch I had noticed in her voice, " does the mother see her children after she is divorced? "

I wanted to say yes, but I knew nothing about how such matters were done at home. I was sure of what was right and just, however, so I answered:

" I do not know, because I never knew of a divorce; but I am sure a mother must have the first right to the children, because they are hers. They must be hers, must they not? You bore those children, did you not? And for years you nursed them. All the trouble has been yours, not their father's."

She sighed, and resumed her packing.

" I love them; that is all I know," she replied. " They are not mine, but their father's. I may see them as they go by me, but they will not know me. I shall be nothing to them after this day."

" It is wicked—wicked—wicked! " I cried vehemently; and under the stress of my feelings I went to find Oishi.

Now, I knew very well that what I was set upon doing was altogether contrary to Japanese ways, and a thing that would be counted a monstrous breach of manners as well as an act of monumental impudence. No Japa-

nese girl would have dreamed of doing it, any more than she would have conceived the idea of climbing up to the moon.

But of course I was outside the Japanese pale, and from the first had taken liberties with the dignified master of the household which made everybody stare—Sir Oishi as well as the others. I think, however, that he grew to like my free Western ways. Certainly, he condescended to talk with me very frequently.

I knew I should find him down by the lake, where he had some work going on; and there he was, giving orders in that quiet, dignified tone which implied that he had never been disobeyed and never expected to be. He betrayed in no way whatever that he was concerned in anything unusual.

He smiled at me, and said something pleasant, but my mind was too full of the unhappy wife and mother to enable me to indulge in the exchange of pretty phrases after the Japanese manner. I came to the point at once.

"Is it true," I demanded, "that you mean to send O Haru San away?"

There instantly flashed into his eyes an expression that made me very uncomfortable, and caused me to wish I had approached the subject more gradually. But almost at once he smiled with a sort of disdain for my impudence and lack of manners.

"It is true," he said.

"She has been a good wife to you," I said hotly, "and a good mother to your children."

He looked at me for a few moments as if studying some problem, then turned and bade me follow him, which I did without a word. He took me to a little pleasure house that overlooked the lake, and in which we would be sheltered from observation and quite alone.

"Come, now, Miss Sunshine," he said to me, giving me the name by which I was generally known, on account

of my golden hair, "you find fault with me because I do something which I think is right. Perhaps in your country customs differ from ours; perhaps they are better. Let us talk, and it may be I shall learn something from you."

"I know I am too young to teach you much," I answered, "but it seems to me that justice is justice. Whatever they may do in my country, there is no reason why you should be cruel to your wife."

"Cruel?"

"Is it not cruel to send her away and rob her of her children?"

"The children are mine."

"Not as much as they are hers. I am sure anyone can see that the children belong more to the mother than they do to the father."

"Do they think so in your country?"

"I do not know what they think in my country, but I am sure they are too just to say the children belong to the father."

"You said I was cruel to send away my wife. Why am I cruel to do that? If she had wished she could have left me."

"But she has done nothing wrong!" I cried.

"Wrong! I do not say she has done wrong; no one will think so. She goes away because my home will be pleasanter for me without her."

"And do you say she will be happier for going?" I demanded. "You know she would rather remain with her children. As for your being happier, why, I have been in your home for a year and I have never heard angry words in it; I have never seen you when you were not being well taken care of. O Haru San has waited on you like a slave."

"O Haru San has done her duty, but if my home will be happier to me without her, why should I not divorce her? In your country do you not have divorce?"

"Yes, they have divorce. I know very little about it, but I know that people who are divorced are not well thought of. My people think that when you are married it is wrong to separate."

"Suppose they do not agree and are not happy together?"

"Anyhow," said I, to shift the ground, "children ought not to be taken from their mother."

"What will she do with them? Her parents do not wish them, and she has no way of taking care of them. With me my sons will be taken care of and brought up to be of some consequence."

"But will they not be unhappy to know that their mother is away from them? Will it not make them sad when they think of her misery?"

"They will soon forget her."

"But she will not forget them. And there is no chance for her in the world. She has spoiled her beauty for you. She blacked her teeth when she married you, and she shaved off her eyebrows when her child was born. Who will marry her now?"

"She may let her teeth come white, and it will not be long before her eyebrows grow again."

"You are heartless," I cried. "The fact is, you do not love her and you do love your concubines. I have seen that much myself."

"But if I do not love her why should I keep her in my home? She knew, and I knew, when we married, that if we did not suit each other we could divorce each other. Why should two people who do not love remain together?"

"But her children?"

"They are my children."

He could not seem to comprehend that their mother had any right to them.

"Are they not as much hers as yours, at least?" I demanded.

"In your country do the children belong to the mother?"

"I do not know, but they ought to."

"But it seems to me," he said quietly, "that the children should be more considered than the mother. If I keep them they will be well cared for; if she takes them who can tell what will become of them? She has no wealth, she can earn none."

"That is it," I cried; "you treat your women like slaves, and they are helpless. That is what is wrong."

"In your country, then, the women are not treated so? They are free like the men, to do as they please? And they have wealth?"

I remembered how hard it was for my mother to earn a living, and how often she had told me women were no better than slaves.

"My mother worked and took care of me," I answered.

"And she belonged to the samurai?"

It was as if he had asked me if she were a lady.

"No, she did not belong to your class," I answered.

"But then there is not such a great difference," he said with a smile. "With our peasants the woman is almost as good as the man. She works as much and is independent of him. Women divorce their husbands as often as the men do their wives in the lower classes. You see a woman who works is at no disadvantage. But a lady cannot work."

"Why can she not?"

"Well, she would not find a husband if she did; not in her own class, anyhow. Do your ladies work?"

"No."

"You see!"

"Ah!" I exclaimed warmly, "but I would work before I would put myself in a man's power. I would rather be a peasant, and control my own happiness, than be a lady and a slave."

I gained nothing for that poor O Haru San by my remonstrance, and I supposed for a long time that I had made no better argument because I had not been able to answer him better about my own country's ways; but since that time I have learned more, and know that I would have been worse off in my argument if I had had more knowledge.

Woman is really no better off in America than she is in Japan. It is true that a man may not here divorce his wife without ceremony, and that he may not take his mistress into his home; though that does not seem to amount to so much when it is considered that in every large city the prostitutes may be counted by the thousand. I am not sure that the mistress in the house is any better than the one with a separate establishment and no sense of responsibility at all.

We have no such class as the samurai, who are born to their place in society, and will not work for that reason, but we have the wealthy class, who will not work because they think it degrading. Indeed, it seems to me I have noticed that women who have worked because they were poor, give themselves over to idleness the moment their husbands become rich.

Divorce is harder to obtain in this country, too, and that seemed to me at first something in our favor; but I noticed several things about it after I began to consider the case. One was that a divorced man lost little if anything of social standing by reason of being divorced, even if he were the guilty person; while the divorced woman always carried a stigma, even if she were quite innocent of wrongdoing.

Then, too, I have noticed that girls with us are not as careful as they should be in the choice of a husband, but seeing in marriage the only respectable way of earning a living, win a husband by being very pleasant to him in the courting days, and being afterward what they must. I have often wondered if husbands and wives

with us would not try all through life as much as during courtship to please, if they knew that a separation could come without discomfort or unhappiness.

I sometimes think, too, that if our women would only learn to be independent of their husbands—economically independent, is the phrase, I believe—they would insist upon a divorce as easy as that of Japan, so that they might insure for themselves, as well as for the men, a marriage which would mean happiness through comradeship, and not only the bare chance of it through a legal slavery.

People may cry out at my views if they like, but, having lived in a country where life is looked at differently, it is possible for me to see things here more nearly as they are. And I tell you it is appalling to see how many wretchedly unhappy homes there are because the man is the master and the woman the slave.

Poor O Haru San, who, as I discovered later, was not happy in her home, any more than her husband, would have remained there, nevertheless, because being a lady she was dependent, and knew that however uncomfortable she was with her husband, she would be fifty times more so when she went home and became the general slave.

I did not think of those things then, for I was only a child, but I did afterward talk with the peasant women, and the women in the silk district, which was near us, and learned that the system of divorce which worked so badly for poor, dependent O Haru San worked very well indeed for them.

In the silk district the women do most of the work and earn most of the money. The peasant women do quite as much work as their husbands. The result is so noticeable that even I could see how different those women were from the ladies of Japan.

They were not forever wondering if their husbands were pleased, for they were independent. And when there were children, the mother did not hesitate at divorce be-

cause she would be separated from them. On the contrary, she knew that often she was better able to take care of the children than the husband, and would be sure to have them in case of separation. Ah! those Japanese men were very helpful to their wives, and treated them as equals. And the best of all was that divorce was very infrequent with those people of the lower classes.

Another very noticeable thing about the peasant women was that they were as strong and active as the men, doing quite as much work, and doing it even more gayly and cheerfully. I have often thought since of the folly of always speaking of women as of the weaker sex. I don't believe they need be the weaker sex at all.

This is a long digression, however, and I hope I shall be forgiven for it. The truth is, that memory is so crowded with pictures of Japan, now one and now another offering itself for notice, that it is hard to know what to tell and what not.

CHAPTER XXIX

I FIND FAVOR

THE summer following O Haru San's divorce, I was fourteen years old, and as strong and well-developed a girl as one would wish to see. I was not a beauty to my Japanese friends, but when I looked in their disks of polished steel, and saw myself reflected there in my odd headdress and kimona, I knew that, according to American standards, I was a pretty girl.

As for my figure, even the Japanese were satisfied with that, and praised it with a frankness that was very pleasant to hear, especially as a Japanese compliment is always couched in the prettiest and most poetical of phrases.

I had quite overcome any sense of shame or immodesty in being nude, and would slip off my clothes for a plunge into the lake without ever stopping to think how many of the male species might be looking on. If the thing I was going to do was right, then the right way to do it was the best and only way.

And I am sure that such freedom from our conventional notions of modesty and propriety worked well; for I never knew a dirty-minded Japanese girl—never. There were no mysteries for them to giggle over; and I really believe that for them as well as for Japanese boys the signs of sex were as commonplace as the chopsticks they used at their meals. How could it be otherwise?

Speaking of chopsticks, reminds me that I had tried to become expert in all things peculiarly Japanese, but

had come very far from success in many cases, even though many times the things I tried seemed at first sight very easy to do. I learned to use the chopsticks in a very short time, and yet their use had seemed very difficult to me at first. On the other hand, it had seemed easy to sit on my heels as they did, but that I never could do for more than a few minutes at a time.

Since that time the Japanese have learned that it is not a good thing to stretch the ligaments of the knees in that way, the tendency being to keep them short-legged. Certainly, the laboring classes, who have no time for sitting down, are finer physically than the upper and leisure classes.

I never learned to use the clogs as they did, either, though that might seem easy enough to anyone looking on. The clogs are held on only by a thong that goes between the big toe and the others, but the children ran and jumped in the clumsy-looking things in a way to make one open his eyes. The fact is, that the Japanese baby begins at once to use his toes more like fingers than like the useless things we stow away inside our rigid shoes.

And such fine feet as the Japanese almost universally have! The toes are long and pliable, and are never distorted. No wonder it is so easy for their gymnasts and tumblers to make such wonderful use of their toes! Why, they can grasp stones with their toes and throw them without effort. My feet were in good condition because I had worn shoes so little, but I never learned to use my toes as they did.

I was a good tumbler, too, and could turn a hand-spring or an air-spring as well as any circus performer I ever saw, but I could never approach the ease and finish of the Japanese tumbling. I must say, however, that none of them could tumble in my way, either.

As for climbing a pole balanced on the shoulder of a man, I never could get the wonderful trick of balance;

and, strong as I was, I did not seem to have that wonderful harmony of muscular development that they had. Each of their muscles simply plays into the work of the other, so that a slightly built Japanese will display marvelous feats of pure strength.

Of course, I learned a great deal. Jugglers, acrobats, and other showmen were plentiful, and did all their work in the open air, calling crowds about them by talking or beating drums, and then doing their work in plain sight and within touch of us.

All of the life was joyous to me. There was nothing in my own country to call me back there, and although I sometimes thought of the time when I might return, it was never seriously. Besides, I was very well aware that my return depended not so much on my will as upon the consent of others.

I was only a child still, notwithstanding the outward signs of womanhood, and to live was enough for me. It is true that I felt alone sometimes, my ways never conforming to theirs, and they making no effort to have them do so. I was looked upon as below the samurai, but my quickness of wit and such knowledge as I had gained made it impossible for them to class me with the ignorant peasantry.

To tell the truth, I was so taken with the joy of living that I gave little thought to the future; none, I may say, excepting in a vague, dreamy way. Then one day I was startled out of my blissful repose, and forced to realize that in one part of the world, as well as another, life had its problems.

Oishi had invited me to go with him to a place some thirty miles from home—a favor which he never dreamed of extending to any other female of his household, and which I owed to his desire to obtain from me all I could tell him of my country. How often I had to confess ignorance of the matters he asked me about!

He was going to meet his daimio—the nobleman to

whom he owed allegiance, and to whom he was devoted in the Japanese way. And, ah! what a loyalty that was! I think I may say that there was nothing Oishi would not have done at the command or for the benefit of his daimio.

When I say nothing, you will understand that I mean it literally when I tell you that one of the stories which was a favorite was that of a samurai who needed some money that he might serve his feudal master, and sold his wife into prostitution to obtain it. And to comprehend the extent of that sacrifice it must be borne in mind that chastity of a wife in Japan is of paramount importance.

I always enjoyed these little journeys with Oishi, for generally we went on ponies over good roads and through the most beautiful country in the world. There was always something new and beautiful for me to see in the way of a temple or a great bronze idol, too.

I put on a pair of close-fitting trousers, tucked my kimona into my obi, and mounted my pony, the horse boy, or betto, holding him by the head until I was ready. The whole family, with smiling faces, stood at the gateway, bidding us good-by and wishing us a pleasant day. That was one of their pretty customs. And they would all come to greet us on our return.

Our bettos released the ponies and sat down for a smoke while we cantered away. That was another interesting thing. The bettos are magnificent-looking fellows, deep-chested and sinewy, as they well need be. They are covered from head to foot with tattooing of most wonderful patterns, and seldom wear clothes, being very proud of their tattooing.

Sometimes they run by the side of your pony, loping along with an ease and unconcern nothing less than marvelous; sometimes they let you go on ahead—if they know they will not be needed on the way—and at the end of your twenty or thirty miles, there they sit, smoking

composedly, and waiting for you. They have taken some short cuts and beaten you.

I don't remember what Oishi and I talked about on this occasion, for it seems to me when I look back, that what happened later in the day so overwhelmed whatever else had happened, as to practically obliterate it entirely from my memory.

I do recall that we found the daimio at one of his country houses up in the mountains, and that, after making my bows to him, I went away with some of his women, who, at the recommendation of Oishi, were going to take me to a pool to bathe, for the day was a very hot one, and I was dusty and wet.

The pool was an artificial one, but made with such art that it looked exactly like a natural lake of small size. I was given a towel, and then watched by the curious women, who had heard of me before, but had never seen me; but I was so used to being stared at that it was nothing to me.

I threw off my robes and trousers, and jumped in, only taking care not to wet my hair, which now was long enough to be properly put up in Japanese fashion, and was too much a work of art to be lightly disturbed.

The water was so cold that I did not remain in long, but soon came out and sat down in the warm sunlight for a leisurely rub. Indeed, one of the mousmees offered her services, and I accepted them very gladly, enjoying the full delight of luxurious laziness.

She had just finished when Oishi and his prince came along, engaged in earnest conversation. We paid no attention to them, excepting to drop our voices to a lower tone, but when they came near me, the prince turned from Oishi and said to me:

"They do well to call you Miss Sunshine. I hope you have had a pleasant bath in the pool." He put it in a much more flowery way than I have done, but this is the gist of what he said.

I thanked him, and bowed as deferentially as I knew Oishi would have me, for he was very particular in having every respect paid to his lord. It was always a wonder to me that he could be so profoundly respectful himself, though, for the prince was immeasurably below Oishi in intelligence.

He asked my honorable age, and uttered a number of pretty compliments, by which his women evidently thought me highly honored, and then passed on, continuing his conversation with his retainer.

I know I enjoyed the visit very much, and was looking forward to a good ride home; for the way would be mostly downhill, and there was a prospect of a beautiful sunset when we came near home. We were to start about the middle of the afternoon.

I had not yet made myself ready when Oishi sent for me to come to him. He was sitting alone in one of the upper rooms, which overlooked the valley up which we had climbed, and when I saw the view, I could not help exclaiming:

"How lovely! I do not believe there is another country in the world so beautiful."

"I have been in no other," he answered, in his grave way, "but I believe what you say; for it seems as if every possible beauty had been lavished on our islands. I am glad you love the land of flowers, Miss Sunshine."

"It would be strange if I did not love it."

"A very great honor has been done you," he said.

I did not understand to what he referred, and suppose I looked puzzled. He pointed down the valley, and I saw that he was calling my attention to some travelers there. I recognized them at once as the prince and his suite, and I wondered how they could have gone without my knowing it, but remembered that I had been up the hill to a temple perched on its top.

"There goes my prince," he said, "and he has honored you with words of praise."

I laughed lightly enough, not forgetting how ugly my golden hair, big eyes, and white skin were to the Japanese.

"I wonder he did not turn away in disgust when he saw me being dried after my bath," I said. "I know how odd I seem to you."

"He was greatly pleased with you; he spoke of your musical voice and your politeness."

"Oh! oh!" I cried gayly, "he should not make fun of me like that. I have neither voice nor politeness when I am compared even with your roughest peasants. I have always told you that your people are far more polite than mine. I only wish I might take home some of your delightful manners, and some of the sweetness of your voices."

"Take home?" he said questioningly, and with even more of gravity in his manner than usual.

"Yes, some day I shall go back to my own country, you know."

"We have adopted you, I think."

I started, and stared at him. He looked down the valley after the prince.

"Yes, you have adopted me, but that does not say that I shall not want to go some day to my own country."

Strangely enough, in that very instant was born a desire to go back to America. I suppose I saw something in his look that told me I was not to be a free agent.

"Miss Sunshine," he said gravely, but very kindly, "you have told me you have no one in your country who will be looking for you, and I have told you many times that we of this land did not wish strangers here, nor wish to go to their country. Do you not understand that it will be best for you to content yourself here, and to become one of us?"

"Be one of you!" I cried, trying to compose my

thoughts so that I should say the right thing, and ending by saying the first thing that came to me: "I be one of you, with this hair, these eyes, this skin? You know that is impossible. Why, who would take me for a wife? I would not wish to marry an ignorant peasant, and one of you samurai would not marry me. How can I be one of you, then?"

My heart was throbbing painfully, for I knew that more was behind, and that he would not have said as much as he had but for pressing reasons. I wondered if the Mikado had sent word by the daimio that I must either become one of the people or die.

"You exaggerate your peculiarities," Oishi said. "It is true that you are very different from us, and that you do not conform to our rules of beauty; but it is very easy to grow fond of you, and to even find pleasure in your hair and skin and eyes. It has been so with me, Miss Sunshine."

"It is kind of you to say so, but I know you do not mean to ask me to be your wife, for I have heard that you are thinking of that pretty Miss Lotos." I tried to laugh as if I were joking, but in fact there was real terror in my heart. I knew something had been planned for me now, and that it was something Oishi did not wish me to know at once. "I shall certainly go back to my own country, Sir Oishi. In the meantime I am too young to think of marriage, even if there were someone I would marry."

"You are not too young, Miss Sunshine. It does not matter what your years are since you are so well grown. You are not too young."

"I am, but that does not matter. I will not marry any man but one I love; and I love no man. Besides, you know very well that it will be better for me to marry in my own country. Anyhow, I am going back."

"No, Miss Sunshine, you must put that idea away

from you. We mean to drive all foreigners out of this land—all excepting you; you shall remain."

"I shall not."

I was frightened, but I was fiercely determined. I began to go over in my mind the possibilities of getting to the eastern coast where there were foreigners.

"You are thinking you can escape," he said quietly. "That can never be. Do you think we will allow you to go back to your country, knowing our language and our ways, so that you may betray us? No, no! Besides, I have a great honor to offer you. You shall never say again that you are ugly to us."

"What is this honor?" I demanded.

"My prince is pleased with you and will have you in Kioto, in his palace."

"He is married already."

"I do not talk of marriage, Miss Sunshine."

"Of what, then?" I panted.

"He will make you his concubine."

"Never—never—never!"

"It is what you must consent to, Miss Sunshine. If he had asked for my own daughter, she should have been his. You must consent."

"I shall not."

"Ah! Well, we will go home now."

CHAPTER XXX

VAIN PROTESTS

THERE was no enjoyment for me in that long ride home. Much of the time Oishi and I rode side by side in silence; though occasionally I would break out with some sort of defiance, such as:

"You cannot make me." Or, "I would rather die." Or, again: "Is this your hospitality?"

Usually he made no answer, as if he thought words wasted when they could not affect the case one way or the other; and, indeed, the more I thought of his readiness to sacrifice himself and his whole family for his prince, the more I realized how desperate my chance was.

And yet I could not see how I could be forced to accept the infamy that miserable daimio wished to put upon me. I went over in my mind all the things that could possibly be done to me if I persisted in my refusal to accept this great honor, and I could see nothing but death if they wished to push the matter so far.

Of course, I knew that Oishi would cut off my head with his own terrible sword at the behest of his daimio; but I wondered if it would come to that. I believe I never actually asked myself whether I would take infamy or death; but I think my mind was made up that infamy should not be my lot, come what might.

We were met at the gateway by the usual cheery outburst of welcome, the household having been warned of our coming by one of the bettos, who had run on ahead as if his nearly sixty miles had been but a gentle saunter. Baths were ready for us, and after the baths, supper.

Oishi acted as if nothing out of the common had taken place, and I, who was at the turning point of my life, as it seemed to me, was depressed and wretched in proportion to his calmness and serenity.

Was he really so sure of bending me to his will as he seemed? I think he was, for he knew better than I the hopelessness of a girl's struggle under the circumstances. And, indeed, what could I do? I asked myself the question often enough, but found no answer.

It is difficult to find place or opportunity in a Japanese household for secret talk; but by watching for it I found the chance to get my little maid aside. I was sure of her sympathy, and I longed for it. I walked with her to the little bower by the lakeside, where we sat down, and looked out on the water, listening to the tinkling of the samisen and to the gentle wash of the waves on the wall.

"Suppose," said I, in a low tone, "someone should propose to you to be his concubine, what would you do?"

She laughed softly. "I would say I had tried marriage and liked it so little that I was sure I should like less to be a concubine. But no one will propose it to me."

"But it has been proposed to me, alas! Is it not a shame?"

"Oishi?"

"Oh, no."

"I could not believe it. Some one of the men, then? But that would be impudent; for, after all, you are one of Oishi's household and must obey him."

She did not mean anything derogatory to me, but, much as she loved me, never got over the feeling that I was of an inferior stock.

"No matter who it was, it would be an insult to me, would it not?"

"Not an insult, Miss Sunshine; you cannot expect to

be a wife, you know. Of course, we all love you, but you are a foreigner."

"It would be better for me to go to my own country, then, it seems to me."

She did not answer that, but only looked non-committal; and I knew from her manner that it must be generally understood that that was a thing not to be done.

"Who is it, then, who has honored himself so much as to wish to make you his concubine?" she asked, changing the subject.

"The prince."

"Oishi's prince?" she demanded in a startled tone.

"Yes."

"Oh!" and she stared out over the lake in silence.

"I am only fourteen," I said vehemently. "I know it is not the custom to treat girls so at my age."

"It is the custom of a samurai to obey his daimio," she answered softly.

"A samurai may do as he pleases; I am not a samurai, and cannot be bound by his rules."

"You belong to Oishi's household."

"So do you," I retorted quickly. "Would you therefore let him dispose of you as he pleased?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will not."

"What, then, will you do?" she asked.

Can you realize what a terrible question that was? I was a foreigner in that country, living only on sufferance. I was helpless. What could I do?

The next day I talked with the grandmother, and found her prepared with a knowledge of the flattering honor that had been conferred on me. She was aghast at my attitude of resistance. It was as if a Christian had defied the Deity.

If it had been for the pleasure of the daimio the grandmother herself would have gone to his palace, whether as concubine or servant. And who was I—an

intruding foreigner, with my white skin and great eyes! —to set my will against the prince's pleasure?

I went to the concubines, with whom I had always been good friends, and talked to them one by one; and like my little maid they asked me what I would do.

The whole household knew it and thought me highly honored, but insane in my attitude toward the prince. My attitude of indignation at being disposed of in such a fashion was simply beyond their comprehension. Was it not a woman's place to be meek, obedient, cheerful?

My mother had given herself in love without marriage, and I could see the purity of that; but to be given in this way, against my consent, despite my repugnance! I grew bigger-eyed than ever in the despair that began to take possession of me.

I went at last to Oishi, to whom, up to this moment, I had not spoken since our return home, though I knew he had been watching my struggles. He was as calm as fate. I felt that he had foreseen my struggle and its inevitable end. How I hated him and his imperturbable face then!

"You think," I cried, in a tone quite unlike any a native woman would ever have employed to a man, "to conquer me through a sense of my helplessness; but I tell you I will never consent."

I stood in front of him, my hands on my hips, my eyes flaming with passion. I think he must have wondered at the taste of his prince in wishing such a virago in his home; but, whatever he thought, his face was always impassive, his voice low and calm.

"What will you do?" he asked.

It was as if he had realized how the question each time it was asked added to my sense of helplessness.

"I can always die," I answered passionately.

"Oh, yes," he answered, a faint smile of amusement passing over his thin lips, while his slender fingers played with the handle of his tanto, or short sword.

I understood what he was thinking, and the meaning of his slight gesture. A samurai always wears a short and a long sword; and it is with the tanto that he commits suicide, or harikari. He meant that he doubted the courage of a foreign girl like me.

"You think I would not do it?" I cried.

"One does such a thing; he does not make a boast of it first."

"At least wait until I am sixteen. You would if I were not a foreigner. Why do you treat me differently from one of your own girls?"

"You are well matured; you are old enough," he answered. I could see that he was relieved in spite of his impassive face. He saw by my answer that I was at the end of my resistance.

"If I refuse to the end, what will you do?" I demanded.

"I do not know. I have not thought of such a thing. What is there for you to do but yield to fate? I knew from the first that you would not like it; but it was a thing my prince wished, and that was enough. What was the use of thinking of resistance? I knew you would ask the opinion of the other women, and that their answers would show you how idle resistance was."

I think if he had made a show of trying to convince me that there was no other way, if he had even shown some anger at my resistance and had offered to coerce me, I might have had some hope of escaping the destiny prepared for me by the very conditions of my existence.

It was once more like the conditions of a nightmare, which render voluntary movement impossible, even while there is the hope always alluring one of being able to accomplish something.

"He cares nothing for me," I said sullenly. "He only wants me as he might want a new and particularly hideous kind of dog."

"That will change in time. I have grown to like you

better than any of the women in the house; and I seldom think of your looks."

There was a flattering thing to say to a girl who had been well aware of her good looks. It was an admission that I was wanted for my ugliness, even while it gave assurance of some other attractive power.

"In my own country I would be thought beautiful," I said. "I do not like being a curiosity. He may learn to dislike me. How can I tell?"

"My prince will treat you well," Oishi said gravely. "You shall go to him with the finest of clothing, and with many things that will make you respected even in his palace. I promise you you shall have one of the most beautiful obis that can be bought in Kioto."

"And when must this be?" I asked.

"In three days."

CHAPTER XXXI

GOING TO KIOTO

THERE are girls who would not have given up the fight at that point, but would have protested, refused, wept, had hysterics; others who would have taken up Oishi's challenge, and found refuge from shame in the waters of the lake, or on the point of one of those terrible swords.

Oishi had guessed right as to my feeling; suicide was not to my taste. On the other hand, I had protested and refused, even after I had become convinced that anything but acquiescence was useless and a waste of energy.

I was sullen at first, and would take no interest in any of the fine things that were being done for me; for Oishi was rich for a samurai, and meant to put as much gilding on the bars of my cage as possible. Then the silks and crêpes were so very beautiful that I could not help admiring them. Later, I laughed in the old carefree way.

Oishi smiled kindly, and talked with me more than ever, taking me out on the lake with him by the hour. My little maid laughed and whispered that if the prince had not spoken so soon Oishi would have been ahead of him.

"And I so ugly? Nonsense!"

"Ah," she said wisely, "it is better to be charmingly ugly than beautiful."

"I like Oishi better than his prince, anyhow," I said.

"That, at least, is not forbidden," she laughed.

"But you will be well off, for the prince is very rich and very generous. You will have the best of everything; and when our Mikado conquers the Shogun the prince will be more powerful than ever. He may even give you a house of your own, if you try hard to please him. Think even now of the honor he does you in sending one of his own norimonos for you!"

A norimono is a palanquin carried by four bearers. It is slung on a stout pole, and is only used by wealthy persons, or those of high rank. Nowadays the norimono is not used, the jinricksha having taken its place.

"But suppose he grows tired of me?"

"Then you can come back to us. Oishi will always be glad to have you back, and so shall we. As for me, I shall never cease to be sad until I see you again. I had hoped you would have me for your maid still."

The dear little creature was genuinely moved at the thought of losing me, and fifty times a day I wished to kiss her to show my affection for her; but I had had a lesson in kissing that satisfied me once and for all. I had kissed one of the little boys to the outspoken disgust of all who saw me. And when I had explained that it was our way of displaying affection, I had been assured that it was a very repulsive way. Their way of caressing a child was to put the nose between the face and the neck and smell long and slowly. And a sweet, satisfying way it was with one of those dainty little creatures, who never had any but the sweetest of body odors.

Indeed, speaking of that, I want to say that I was not long in discovering that the whole Japanese people are so exquisitely sweet and clean that even in a crowd of naked, perspiring peasants you can never detect an unpleasant odor.

When I think of them and then of a group of the best of Americans!

Well, the hour of my departure came, and a wretched sadness came with it. I betrayed my affection for them

all rather with American energy than with Japanese calm and gentleness; and they all let me see that they had learned to love me.

I think few brides ever started out with a finer or larger wardrobe than I had; for not only Oishi lavished clothes on me, but every member of the household, down to the kitchen scullion.

And when I was carried out of the courtyard in my gorgeous norimono they all assembled at the gate—quite contrary to the rule in the case of such a nonentity as I—and shouted me a farewell.

I cried. Perhaps a boy under similar circumstances would not have shed tears, but I did; and I think no less of myself for doing so. They had all been kindness itself to me, and I did not know that I should ever see any of them again.

Besides I was only fourteen years old, and I was going away from the peace and serenity of a home to endure I knew not what. To say that I was frightened will be to understate the truth. When I was carried down the road at a gentle, swinging trot by my stalwart bearers, the cheery shouts of my friends ringing in my ears, I felt as if an iron hand were clutching at my throat.

I closed the little window by my side and covered my face with my hands. And then I wept as I think I have never wept since; but quietly, for I did not wish the bearers to know what I was doing. I was afraid they might speak to my escort.

For I had an escort of the prince's retainers of the lower rank on account of the unsettled state of the country.

I don't know how long I should have gone on crying but for an appalling thought—the condition of my face.

I drew my steel mirror out of its silk case and looked at myself. If I had been ugly before, I was simply hideous now; for my face had been painted and powdered in the way proper to the notions of my friends, and was

now horribly streaked where the tears had run and where my fingers had smeared.

I immediately dried the last of my tears and got out my toilet articles, with which I had been thoughtfully provided. I painted and powdered again to the best of my ability, and I think presented a sufficiently artificial appearance; for when later the head of the escort came to ask me some questions about meals, he did not look any more disgusted than he had when he first saw me.

We stopped at an inn at midday, and I was given every opportunity to rest myself in my own way. Tea and tobacco were brought at once, and the hostess assured me that the inn and all in it were at my disposal.

But I was well looked over; for not only was I a sight because I was a foreigner with golden hair, big eyes, and a white skin, but the interest in me was intensified a thousand-fold because so exalted a personage as the prince had done so strange a thing as to honor me.

It seemed perfectly well known that I was going to Kioto to be the nobleman's concubine, and whoever could make any excuse for doing so, came and had a look at me. I am sure the wonder was greater with them after they had seen me than before.

At night we came to within five miles of Kioto and to the south of it, the circuit having been made in that direction in order that we might be nearer the prince's palace; for it was the intention to allow me to rest, and be made beautiful, so as to go to the palace in the best condition the next day.

This time we put up at the house of one of his retainers, who evidently was not as rich as Oishi, but of equal importance. I was welcomed in the graceful way so characteristic of those wonderful people; a way that is the furthest from boisterous, and which cannot be described by our English word hearty, and which, nevertheless, gives you the feeling that the heart of your

host has gone out to you so fully that you are giving him a pleasure in permitting him to entertain you.

I enjoyed the bath they had ready for me, for it had been cramping work to remain in the norimono so long, and I was tired. They would have dressed my hair for me, too; but I explained to them that, being a foreigner, it was easier for me to sleep with my hair in foreign fashion, and that I would have it done in the morning.

They watched me with a well-concealed curiosity while I did my hair up in a braid and let it hang down my back; and I am sure that if I had had a foreign costume to dress in I could have done them no greater favor than to don it.

As it was, I made myself as pleasant as I knew how by telling them the things about America which I had learned by experience they would be likely to enjoy hearing.

Then I asked all sorts of questions about the prince and the inmates of his house, excusing myself constantly lest I should in my foreign ignorance demand of them some impropriety.

I explained to them that I realized the great honor that was being done me in being taken to the palace as the prince's concubine, and that I wished to be as well prepared as possible, so that I might not disgrace my good friend and patron, Oishi.

And they talked very freely in their naïve way about everything, describing at my request all the notable objects of interest around Kioto, and even arranging that some day I might join them in a picnic.

They volunteered some information about the foreign settlement at Hiogo, upon which I laughed, and said I fancied that when the Mikado succeeded in subduing the Shogun, the foreigners would be driven out of the country again.

"Yes, yes," they assented eagerly; "that is true. There are only a handful of them there, and it was

wicked of the Shogun to admit them; but you are right in what you say—they will not be there for long."

"I wonder you have allowed them to remain so near here as it is," I said. "It is such a short distance. Do any of them ever come here?"

"Never! They are not permitted out of their little settlement. No, they should never see Kioto and live."

"I have been very fortunate, then, I think."

"Oh, yes; but you were a child when you came here, and now you are like one of us. Except for your white skin and your hair, no one would know that you were not native."

I laughed merrily. "You mean that in the dark I could pass for a true mousmee. I am sure if I showed so much as my eyes the children would scream. You need not deny it, for I have tried it."

They did, in their politeness, try to minimize my terrible ugliness; but it was hard even for such past mistresses in courteous speeches to hide their conviction that I was indeed very ugly.

"I have one comfort, though," I said; "and that is that in my own country I would be considered good-looking. Am I really the only foreign female you have ever seen? Surely there must come many ships to Hiogo, bringing ladies. Do you never go to Hiogo?"

"We hear there are many foreign ships come there, but we do not go to see them. If there are any ladies, we do not know it."

"And yet," I said, "there is such a good road between here and there, I am told. And it is not far."

"Oh, no; not as far as we wish. The bettos can run there in four hours."

CHAPTER XXXII

LIBERTY OR DEATH

YOU may be sure I did not sit up talking to the ladies after my fatiguing ride just for the pleasure of talking. No, indeed! I had another idea than that.

The fact was that from the moment I had given up hope of moving Oishi from his purpose of making me yield to the wishes of his prince, I had determined to make a desperate attempt to escape. I knew that if I failed the matter would be hushed in the effectual way known to those grim people—a sharp and heavy sword.

But I had come this far without arousing a suspicion of what I meant to do, which proved that I had acted my part very well; or, perhaps, it proved as much that no one dreamed that a girl of fourteen would have the courage to make the attempt I contemplated.

I had asked questions of everybody I had dared to talk to, and had gathered all the information I could about the road to Hiogo, the direction, the distance, and the peculiarities of the country, so that I might make as few remarks as possible.

I could not count on my knowledge of the language to enable me to ask questions, even if I had had a sufficiently effective disguise, for I must travel by night. And yet I must be sure to find the foreign settlement before daylight or I would be sure to be seen by one of the fanatical retainers with his two terrible swords; and he, without knowing I was a fugitive from the will and pleasure of a daimio, would find it cause enough to whip out his

long sword on me, that I was a white-skinned, yellow-haired, big-eyed foreigner.

It was a hot night, but I own I was shivering inside of me as if the North Pole were there. I knew the risks I was running, and I was afraid; but go over the matter as often as I would I could never come to any other conclusion than that to yield would be shame and infamy; and that because I yielded the shame and infamy would be my own.

I studied the house well before I went to bed, making excuses for going to one part and another; so that when I finally lay down in the great room upstairs with the rest of the family, I was at least familiar with the way out. This was the easier because Japanese houses differ very little from each other.

I had not meant to sleep at all; but although I had slept as much as I had been able in the norimono, and notwithstanding I was in such a state of fright over my contemplated escape, I did close my eyes.

And, oh! the dreams I had! My last thought had been to see where my host put his swords when he lay down; and for his own good reasons he had withdrawn the keen, shining blade from its scabbard, and had eyed it lovingly before placing it beside him on the floor. I suppose that was the immediate cause, but my nervousness would have brought me fearful dreams anyhow, I am sure.

I waked up just in time to escape decapitation at the hands of a hideous samurai, who had been close at my heavy heels for an interminable time, just on the verge of slashing me all the while.

I was rejoiced to wake for a better reason than that I might escape the pursuer of my dreams, however; for I do believe that but for the dream I might have overslept myself. And then what should I have done?

As it was I knew from the way I felt that I must have

passed beyond midnight, and the terror that filled me at once threw me into a dripping perspiration.

I waited until I could calm myself, as I presently did, for when it comes to real action I find I am usually able to control my emotions; then I raised myself on my elbow, and tried to penetrate the gloom of the room, so as to distinguish objects.

In a little while I could do this sufficiently to make out all the prostrate bodies, and to satisfy myself that all were asleep. Then I rose softly and stole along the line of sleepers, my heart in my throat, you may be sure, when I came to my samurai host. For if he had been roused, the chances were he would have had his sword out and using it before he was fully awake.

It seemed to me I had never known a floor in that country to creak so. I was down on it and stretched out in pretended sleep half a dozen times before I reached the door.

Fortunately, I was quite nude, as they all were because of the heat, so that I did not have to fear the rustling of garments. But the stairs were yet to come, and then I would have to fear not only those upstairs, but such of the servants and retainers as slept downstairs.

However, I reached the lower floor without arousing anybody, and made my way successfully to where my bundles had been put, and one of which I had carefully set a little apart in order that I might have no difficulty in distinguishing it. It contained the clothing I had fixed upon to wear on my flight to the foreign settlement.

This clothing I had surreptitiously bought one day, and had contrived to keep it from examination by even my little maid. It consisted of the blue cotton trousers and common kimona of the peasant woman, together with the blue towel which they so often wear over the head.

Dressed in this way I knew I would be freer to move

and less likely to be detected as a foreigner at a casual glance. My greatest danger in being seen, in fact, was my height, which really was gigantic, even for a robust peasant woman, for I was at that time quite five feet three inches in height, and broad in proportion.

These things I managed to put on. The obi, or band about the waist, was the most difficult thing to arrange, so that it would pass muster; but I really had no idea of being examined closely, if seen at all, for few people would be on the roads at such an hour. On my feet I put a pair of one-toed stockings, in which I would be able to move more quietly as well as more quickly, and which would stand the wear of a few hours.

The difficult thing that now remained to do was to take down one of the shutters, which had been put up on going to bed; but every bit of woodwork in a Japanese house is fitted so perfectly that it is seldom there is any sticking in the grooves; and, moreover, the wood is all of a soft variety and unpainted, so that it has no hard surface to click or ring if it touches anything.

I was very glad of these things when I took down the shutter I had marked in my mind as the correct one; for in spite of my self-control my hands trembled so that I banged the shutter more than once.

I can give no description of how I felt as I crept out of that house, and the consciousness came to me that now I was taking a step which might mean a swift and sudden death or a reunion with people of my own kind.

I thought of my dear friends over there on the lake, where I might have been contented to remain almost any length of time, and I thought of the strangers of my own race whom I was seeking. My heart was with my friends; but they had driven me away from them. Their ideas and mine had differed, and it was better that we should part.

Of course, it would have been better if I could have put up the shutter, but its displacement was less likely to

be noticed in the warm weather than if there had been cold winds blowing. Anyhow, I could not put it up from the outside, and was obliged to leave it lying across the opening.

It is marvelous how much hope and courage are hidden in the fresh air of heaven. I took deep breaths of the air as I looked up at the stars, and, desperate as the undertaking was, I felt a sudden buoyancy that was in itself a factor in success.

I wasted no time in getting away from the vicinity of the house, you may be sure; but took the path to the road, and was soon running along through the silence of the night, straining my eyes and ears for sight or sound of danger.

My chief difficulty as yet, however, was knowing when to turn from the road I was on to the one which led straight to Hiogo. From the moment I made that turn I should be in uncertainty of what was going to happen to me until I came to the end of my journey.

Fortunately for my comfort, I had learned to know the skies for some purpose during the voyage, for Captain Hawes had pointed out star after star, and constellation after constellation, during the lovely nights when we sat on deck. So that I knew how to take my course better, perhaps, than if I had had only the sun to guide me.

I took a gentle jog-trot, as being easier than a walk, a thing I had learned from my talks with the bettos, who certainly understood how to get over the ground comfortably and easily as well as anybody.

My kimona was a light one, but I took it off and ran in my trousers. If I had dared, I would have taken them off, too; but I knew I could not get them on quickly enough in case of anyone coming upon me, and in that case their whiteness would have betrayed me.

It was an anxious few minutes for me when I came at last to the turn I believed I ought to take. I had not dared make any inquiries about it, and had only the fact

that the road was crossed by a very beautiful bridge just before reaching the turn.

There had been three bridges altogether so far, but the one I had just passed was the only one that struck me as especially beautiful, and I had no way of knowing that there might not be a still more beautiful one further on.

I stood there and studied the matter, resting at the same time, and recovering my breath. If I went right I went to freedom; if wrong, to death. That was as certain as anything in life could be, guessed in advance.

Should I go on and look for a more beautiful bridge? Should I make the turn? One way or the other I must decide; I could not stand there undecided.

I took the turn and broke into a run. Was I running toward freedom or toward death? I never dreamed of the possibility of capture and life.

CHAPTER XXXIII

I FIND HIOGO

THE road was good, the night clear. I could only dimly see ahead of me on account of the trees that lined the roadside; but now and again there would come a cleared space in the road so that I could look up and see the North Star. By that I guided myself.

I met no one, excepting when I came to a village. I passed through four, and each one had a watchman going about, striking his sticks together. I wondered if he made his regular noise so that intruders might be warned and hide from him. Anyhow, that is what I did without difficulty.

Between running and walking, I think I must have made twenty miles before daylight came and warned me to find a hiding place. If I had only known that Hiogo was at the end of the road, I might have taken the risk of reaching it before the country was fairly awake; for it must have been about four o'clock when I stopped.

Perhaps it was just as well that I was ignorant of where I was, for I fancy I was so tired that I could not have gone enough farther to have done me any good.

I sought the shelter of a wooded hillside, put on my kimono and blue towel head covering, lay down in a clump of bushes, and, in spite of my danger, was asleep within fifteen minutes.

I must have been more nearly exhausted than I suspected, for I did not open my eyes until the afternoon was half over. All about me was as silent as the grave; and it was not until I had parted the bushes and looked

down on the road that I was aware that I had climbed so considerable a distance from it.

What might have been going on earlier in the day down there I could not guess, but at present there were few passengers, and they were mostly peasants going in one direction with their rude carts heavily laden, or in the other direction empty.

When the cart was laden, the wife and mother, with her baby strapped on her back, would be in the shafts with her husband, with a servant pushing behind; when the cart was empty of its market load, the little woman and her baby were to be seen seated comfortably in it, the two men cheerfully drawing her.

I confess I sighed with a bitter regret that I should be forced to leave these people, this beautiful country, to go back to my own world. It was like leaving Paradise. I had no one in my own country, and I loved so many here. Alas! I wondered why that silly daimio could not have let me alone.

However, he had not let me alone, and there I was in danger of my life because I had chosen my own way, instead of being like a nice little mousmee, and doing as the man of the family had wished. For all I knew, there were a score of two-sworded men waiting all along the road for me, ready to cut me down with one blow. I had seen the soldiers practicing the blows at Oishi's, and under his direction; and I knew how effective it was. As for Oishi, I knew that much as he loved me, his sword would be the readiest to cut me in two, if I fell into his hands.

I was far more thirsty than hungry, and could have done very well if only I had had some water to drink. The best I could do, however, was to mark a spot where there was a well, so that when night fell I could go to it. In the meanwhile I dreamed day dreams as only a child can.

When night came I started out of my shelter sooner

than otherwise I would have done, because I was so thirsty. Fortunately, no one challenged me as I swallowed down mouthful after mouthful of the clear, cold water; and I started on my way again, refreshed and ready to go until I came to my journey's end.

I took a risk in going out before people had retired indoors for the night, but I was so anxious to be doing something, that I had felt it impossible to go back to my hiding place after taking my drink.

I was frightened a number of times, but had no real mishap during my passage along the road; so that if there were any soldiers out in search of me they must have missed me entirely.

As the night wore on, and I knew I must have covered many miles, I began to grow anxious for some sign to tell me that I was near the object of my seeking. That I had been coming in the right direction to approach the sea I was sure, for I had become sufficiently familiar with the topography of the island to know that much.

Finally, I swung around a curve in the road, and all unexpectedly there was the blue water of the Suwo Nada lying glistening under the light of the stars. The Suwo Nada, or Inland Sea, as foreigners call it, is said to be the most beautiful sheet of water in the world; and from what I afterward saw of it I do not doubt that it is; but at that time I only thought of it as a proof that I had come the right way.

I drew a long breath of relief, for in spite of me I had been having the most dismal forebodings of having taken the wrong road; and what that meant to me can easily be imagined. I am sure that if I had missed my way and been obliged to wander about the country in search of Hiogo, I must have finally delivered myself up to the people: for it would have been impossible to escape detection with such hair, skin, and eyes as mine, which marked me as a negro would be marked in a land where none had ever been seen before.

I sat down under a tree by the edge of a wall which ran between the water and the road; and I think I must have fallen asleep, for I started up a little later in the way one does who loses his balance, and found that I was just about to take a dive into the sea.

The road ran both ways along the water, and I was obliged to choose the way I would take. There was nothing to guide me and I chose at random. I could see the North Star at my left hand, and I kept it there.

I put on my kimona and head towel, for in a few minutes I came upon a village. I heard the watchman come toward me and hid until he was past. There were a number of native houses, and then my heart gave a leap. It was impossible to doubt that I was in Hiogo, for there stood such an ugly, square house as only people outside of Japan build.

I grew weak all at once. I knew I was safe now, but I suddenly began to wonder how I would be received when I presented myself. I could not fail to realize that my coming would mean a deal of trouble to whoever tried to help me. I don't think I doubted that help would be extended to me; but I did wonder what would be said, and how I should be regarded. And how should I gain entrance to the house?

There were several foreign houses along the water front, and I went quietly from one to the other, studying them, trying, I suppose, to find some indication on the outside which would guide me.

The only thing I did see, however, was an open window in the second story of the first house; and into that I threw two stones. After the second stone a head was thrust cautiously out, and a man's voice demanded peremptorily:

"Who's that? What's wanted?"

"Don't look out! don't! don't!" I heard a woman's voice say almost immediately, and my heart leaped. I

had hardly expected to find a woman in the settlement; for I had been told there were none resident there.

I hurried out of the shadow of the building so that I could be seen, and called out in a low tone:

"I am an American girl, escaped from the interior. I was wrecked on the other side of the island."

"Good Lord!" the man ejaculated. "What's your name?"

"Margaret Grant. I was on the *Abigail* of Bath, Captain Hawes, wrecked a year and a half ago. Please let me in, for if I should be discovered I might be killed."

"Wait a minute," he said, and his head was withdrawn to give place to that of a woman, who peered down at me.

"You have Japanese clothes on," she said in a suspicious tone.

"There was nothing else for me to have."

"How do we know this is not a trick?" she demanded.

"I couldn't do any harm, anyhow," I answered, thinking her very unreasonable. "I am only a girl."

"What did you say your name was?"

"Margaret Grant. I am only fourteen years old."

The lower door of the house was opened at this juncture, and when I ran to it I was confronted by two men, who dragged me into the house with a swiftness that precluded the possibility of anybody following, supposing I had had companions.

The precautions they took showed that they realized the insecurity of the situation of the foreign element in the country. They told me to go upstairs in front of them, which I did. I was pushed into a room, and held by one of them, while the other lighted a lamp.

Then they stood off and looked at me, and at the same time I looked at them. They were both in pajamas, just as they had got out of bed. One was a rather young man, the other was middle-aged; and I knew at a glance that he was a sailor.

We were not through studying each other when the lady who had been talking to me came in in a wrapper, which she had thrown over her night clothes. She began at once asking questions, and giving her opinion of the affair, all in a breath, as it seemed, she was so voluble.

She was a fright to look at, and her voice was pitched in a shrill, nasal falsetto. It was useless for me to try to say anything while she talked, so I waited for her to stop. Her husband evidently knew the futility of waiting, for he said, in a gruff but kindly tone: "How can she talk if you go on at her like that, Sally? Do shut up!"

"Well, I must say you're polite," returned Sally; but she desisted, and I told my story, first taking off my blue towel so that my hair might be seen, and so bear testimony for me.

From the moment they saw me in the light I had no difficulty in making them believe me. The fact was that every foreigner at that time in Japan was perfectly well known, so that I might have told any story I chose and been believed, so extraordinary was it that I should be there at all.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SYONARA, NIPPON!

THE gentlemen were Mr. Drew, agent of an American firm in Hiogo, and Captain Archer, of the bark *Priscilla* of Boston; Sally was the wife of Captain Archer.

Day dawned before my story had been told, and an hour beyond that was taken up in asking me questions, and before the men saw by my heavy eyelids that I could hardly keep awake. Then Mrs. Archer was told to take me to her room and put me to bed, while she kept watch that no one should discover my presence in the house until they returned from a visit to the American consul.

Mrs. Archer, with a singular lack of thoughtfulness, which I afterward discovered was a peculiarity of hers, started in to talk to me as soon as she had me alone; but I was too sleepy and too tired to care whether she talked or not, and, while she rattled on in an inconsequential way, let my clothes drop to the floor, and crept into the bed quite nude, according to my custom of many months.

I remember vaguely that she was horrified at such conduct, and protested that I must wake up and put on a nightgown of hers; but I was determined to sleep, and did with her, as I had often done with an insistent mosquito—let her buzz at will.

I was not allowed much time for sleep, however, but was waked up within two hours by Mrs. Archer screaming in my ear and shaking me with all her strength.

"My land!" she cried, in her piercing falsetto, "you sleep like the dead. The house might burn down and you

in it. Get up, quick! You're to go aboard the *Priscilly* right away. You're to put some of my things on for a disguise, so's you can get aboard without bein' seen."

I was awake enough by this time to wonder how I was expected to accomplish that feat, and, moreover, to be able to conjecture that I was to be hurried away from Hiogo before harm could come to me.

"When does the *Priscilla* sail?" I asked.

"Right away. We're only waiting for you; so hurry into these things."

Later I learned that after a consultation with the consul, and then with some of the other foreign residents of the place, there had been a fund subscribed which would pay for my passage to America in the bark, the captain himself giving his proportionate share.

I was so heavy with fatigue and the desire to sleep, that it was some time before I was awake enough to take much interest in the process of putting me into the "garments of civilization," save the mark! But when that worthy woman handed me a corset, I was awake enough to revolt.

"Thank you," I said, pushing it back, "I don't care for that."

"No doubt it's a little small for you," she said with a simper of pride in her own attenuated waist, "but we can let it out a little. My land! you ought 'a' been in corsets these two years. I s'pose these heathenish folks don't know what a good shape is."

"No," I answered, "they keep themselves as the Lord made them."

"I guess they do," she answered sharply, resenting the imputation that the Creator preferred a natural figure; "they don't wear any clothes at all, half the time. Here! put them on, and by the time we're home we'll have you a decent figure; though I don't believe you'll ever get your waist down to where it ought to be."

"I don't think I ever shall," I answered; "for I don't mean ever to wear corsets."

She stared at me as if she had detected me in a serious moral delinquency; then pursed her lips and tossed her head as one relieving herself of all responsibility.

"All right," she said; "I s'pose you'll have your own way; but I will say that I don't consider it modest, to say nothing of ruining your shape. I guess you've lived with these heathen so long that you've got some o' their notions about goin' without clothes. I can tell you you'll soon learn civilized ideas about such things. There!" as she saw me vainly trying to button her waist, "my land! that shows!—draw in, or you'll never make it meet."

"I won't try," I replied calmly, giving up the effort and putting the skirt on.

"What will you do?" she demanded, her face full of the horror she felt.

"Do? I can't do anything but leave it as it is. Oh, what foolish clothes!" I cried petulantly, when the skirt was on and the belt refused to meet around my waist.

"Foolish! leave it as it is! Go before the men folks looking like that? Margaret," she said primly, "I believe you have no more modesty than these hussies here. Would you let those men see you half dressed that way?"

"Half dressed! I'm dressed more than I want to be now," I retorted, rather tartly, I'm afraid, for my exertions were beginning to tell on my temper. "I'll pin the things on, and take them off the minute I get on board."

"And what will you wear when you get on board?" she demanded sharply.

"I'll wear my kimona, or nothing, or trousers, I don't care what. Anything but these silly clothes, that bind everywhere and make me feel as if I were helpless."

I suppose I was acting foolishly, but the clothes did seem absurd; and besides there was something exasperat-

ing in the shrill voice and narrow mind of the woman. I wondered if the quiet, soft-voiced, courteous Japanese people were irritated as I was by the voice and manners of such a woman.

"And I can tell you," she screamed, "that you don't go one step aboard till you're decently dressed; so now!"

There came a peremptory knocking at the door, and a voice saying:

"Hurry up! Ain't you dressed yet, my girl? There ain't no time to lose. We ought to be aboard."

I ran to the door and opened it before the horrified Mrs. Archer could interpose her meager person, and in spite of her shrill cry of: "Oh, my land! Joshua, don't you dare come in here! Well, I never!" The last was a cry of despair and shocked modesty, for Captain Archer was face to face with me; and my waist was mostly unbuttoned, my skirt held only by pins.

"Are you ready?" he said to me. "What is the matter, Sally?" he said to her. He actually did not seem to notice that I was not properly closed up.

But Mrs. Archer, more solicitous for his morals and modesty than I, had recovered herself, and was between him and me, pushing him out, and pushing me back, and saying over and over:

"Get out, Joshua! she shan't set a foot on board!"

Joshua Archer was evidently acquainted with his wife's peculiarities, for he told her gruffly, but not at all unkindly, that she was crazy, and that there was no time to lose. He bade me put on a hat, and something to cover the gap in my waist, and come along as quickly as possible.

A crêpe shawl that lay on a table covered the gap, and a bonnet, which made me feel ridiculous, covered my head. I am very sure I must have looked a figure of fun, but when I went downstairs and into the presence of half a dozen men, not one of them smiled, but all acted as if they could not come near enough to me, fairly de-

vouring me with their eyes. Poor fellows! Mrs. Archer was the only white woman in the settlement, and my fresh, girlish face won them instantly.

I wonder if I will be believed if I say that, misled by the long skirts I wore, three of the gentlemen—varying in age, I believe, from twenty-five to fifty—offered at the last minute, through the captain, to marry me if I would consent. And the captain told me later that even when he assured them I was only fourteen, they still insisted that they would not mind that in the least.

My entrance into Japan was tragic in the extreme; my exit from it was all a piece of comedy, if not of broad farce.

Three men, who did not know anything of me, but that I was young and pretty, struggling with each other for my hand; Captain Archer alternately swearing and guffawing, as his impatience to be gone and his sense of humor were appealed to; Mrs. Archer, neglected for a more youthful beauty, bridling and tossing her head and talking at everybody in shrill and voluble innuendo.

But the farcical side of it did not impress me. I was thinking all the while of the quiet dignity of the men of Japan, and of the restful gentleness of the women. What was I running away from? What was I going to?

We stepped into the little boat that waited for us, at last, and were rowed out to the bark by the serious-faced native oarsmen, who had stared in wondering silence at our barbaric leave-taking. My tongue itched to speak to them in the soft, liquid tones of their own tongue, but I dared not.

I looked back at the lovely green hills of that fairy land of beauty, and big tears filled my eyes. Infamy or death was my choice there, but I loved that land of soft tones and courtesy, and I went away from it with an aching heart.

I climbed to the deck of the bark, and if the sailor

instinct in me sent a thrill through me at once more being on the deck of as trim a craft as ever cut water, it was soon over in the melancholy of looking over the rail at the land I was bidding farewell to forever.

When the anchor was up and the sails began to fill, I sobbed. A native boat hovered about, trying to sell some curios, I think. I leaned over, and called out in the sweet, native tongue:

"Boatman! boatman! No, I don't want your goods, although they are most beautiful. Will you carry a message for me?"

He stared as he listened to my Japanese, but said he would do anything he could to please me.

"Do you know Oishi, the samurai who lives near the end of Lake Biwa?" I asked.

"He is well known by reputation."

"Will you send him word of farewell from me? I am known to him as Miss Sunshine."

"I will send it."

"Say to him that Miss Sunshine goes away forever, but that as long as she lives she will remember his goodness and that of his whole house."

"He shall have the message."

"Syonara!"

"Syonara, Miss Sunshine!"

I let my head fall on my arm as I rested it on the rail, and I cried bitterly. That night when the last rays of light allowed me to see the hills of Japan, I cried out:

"Syonara, Nippon!" meaning "Good-by, Japan."

Another stage in the journey of my life had been passed.

[The End.]